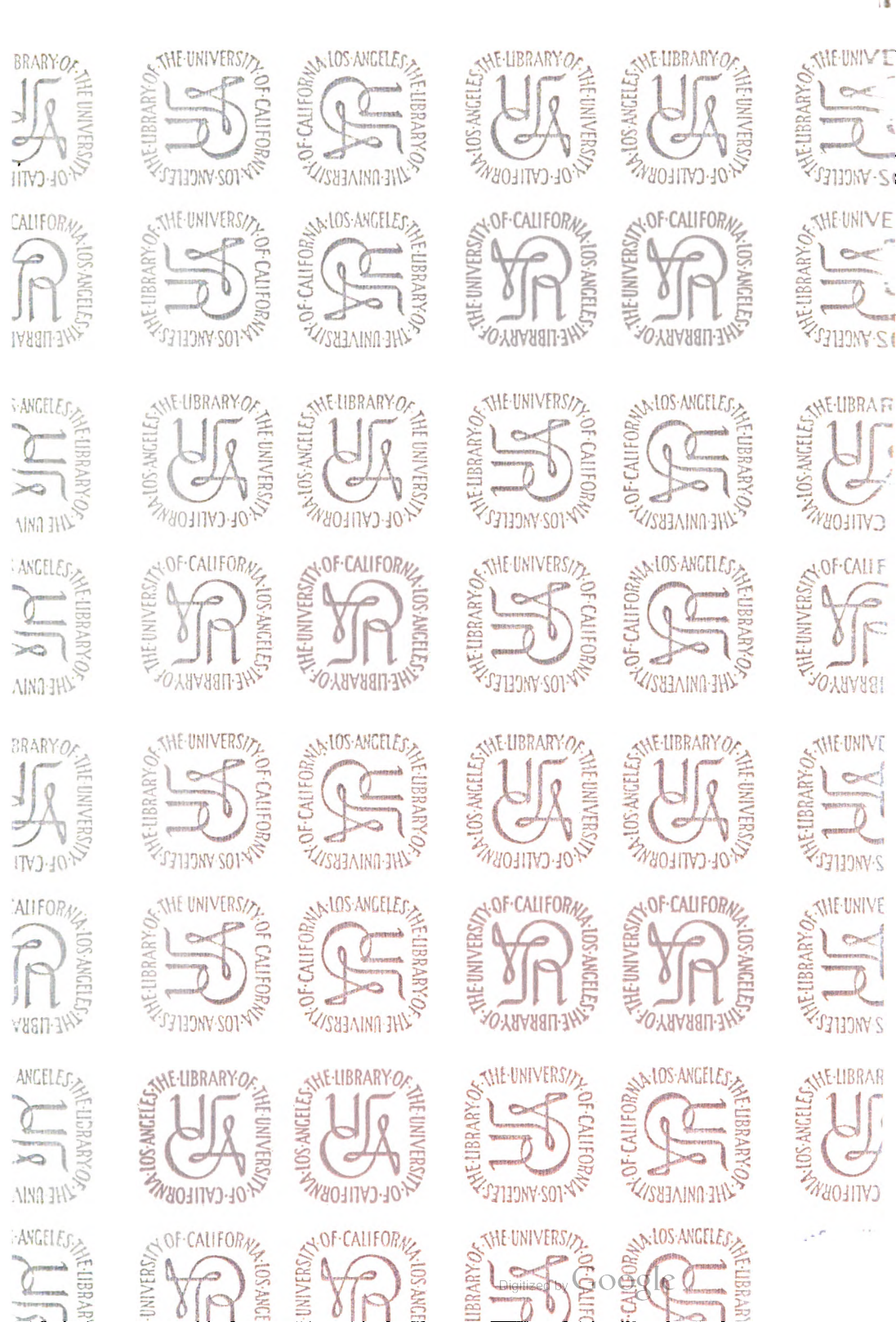
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS

OF

MAJOR GEORGE BERNARD ERATH

DICTATED TO AND ARRANGED

BY

LUCY A. ERATH

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
SOUTHERN BRANCH

AUSTIN
TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
1923

86773

Digitized by Google

COPYRIGHTED, 1924

BY

LUCY A. ERATH

(These *Memoirs* are reprinted from *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XXVI, 207-233, 255-280; XXVII, 27-51, 140-163.)

Digitized by Google

F
390
E65

CONTENTS

		PAGE
1.	Youth in Austria and Wurtemberg, 1813-1832	1-7
2.	The journey to America, 1832	7-12
3.	Getting settled, 1832-1834	12-21
4.	Surveyor and Indian fighter, 1834	21-27
5.	At San Jacinto, 1836	28-42
6.	Aftermath of San Jacinto	42-47
7.	Little River Fort established and the Elm Creek fight, 1836-1837	47-53
8.	Surveying and Indian fighting resumed, 1838-1842	54-61
9.	The Expedition to the Rio Grande under General Somervell and the Battle of Mier, 1842	62-78
10.	Congressman and legislator, 1843-1846	78-83
11.	Activity as a surveyor from 1846-1857	83-88
12.	Protecting the frontier, 1858-1865	88-99
13.	Aftermath of the Civil War	99-101
	Index	103-105

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS OF MAJOR GEORGE BERNARD ERATH[1]

LUCY A. ERATH

1. Youth in Austria and Wurtemberg, 1813-1832

I was born on the first day of January, 1813, in Vienna, Austria. My father was German, from the Black Forest district in Würtemberg; my mother was of Greek origin, though a native of Vienna, which is a conglomerate of many races. My father's people had been tanners for generations; a kind of class system prevailed there—the sons being brought up to the vocation of their father. I do not know how long my own family had been tanners, but my father's brothers carried on the ancestral business in their native place of Rottenburg on the Neckar River, an ancient town of perhaps five thousand inhabitants, twenty miles from Stuttgart and seventy-five miles from Strassburg. My father, having gone to Vienna, there owned his own tan-yard. He may or may not have intended me for a tanner; he took particular pains with my education, beginning it with private tutors in the home before I was six years old. At six I was sent to school, and at nine I entered Santa Anna college, where I gained a little knowledge of Latin preparatory to entering a university. I studied diligently all foreign languages, particularly English and Spanish,

[1]As surveyor and Indian fighter—the former by choice the latter by necessity—Major Erath gained an "extensive knowledge of the lines and corners of the old surveys in Milam land district." "Having an extraordinary memory and being a close observer," he was continually appealed to by parties interested in those surveys to straighten out tangles of all sorts. (De Cordova, *Texas: Her Resources and Her Public Men*, 128-130.) His life on the frontier and his numerous encounters with Indians furnished him with a fund of information that has greatly appealed to newspaper correspondents and local historians. (Sleeper and Hutchins, *Waco and McLennan County, Texas;* Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas;* Brown, *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas; A memorial and biographical history of McLennan, Falls, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas;* De Shields, *Border Wars of Texas.*) Yielding to the importunities of these writers, Major Erath, in 1886, dictated his recollections to his daughter, Miss Lucy A. Erath. "At the time these pages were written," writes Miss Erath, "my father was seventy-three years of age, in very poor health and blind. Mentally, his vigor was the same as it had always been, and as it continued up to the day of his death, May 13, 1891." Miss Erath put the manuscript in shape for publication in 1916. Only slight changes have been made in the manuscript in its publication—E. W. Winkler.

Digitized by Google

as I thought they would be of service to me in the new countries of America, toward which even that early my thoughts were turned.

It was a bold dream then, that of going to America from Austria. For Austria did not encourage emigration; she barely permitted it, and would not allow a youth of the age for military service to leave the country unless he gave good security for his return at a stated time. Austria wanted her subjects for her own service; she wanted the young men of her land for foreign wars. Austria has advanced much since then. At that time she ruled with a despotic sway, and was much behind Germany. The latter country compelled a man on reaching the age of twenty to serve in the army, but so far behind this was Austria that she exempted no age from conscription, and a boy of fifteen was liable to it. She pressed her subjects at a moment's notice, and rushed them off to some foreign war for, perhaps, a fourteen year's term of service.

I was sent to the Polytechnic Institute at the age of twelve. The regulations did not admit any one under fourteen, but as we had friends of influence to help us, and as I had advanced sufficiently, I was smuggled in, and there received instruction in science generally for nearly two years. Then my father died, leaving an encumbered estate, and I went home to work and to help take care of my mother and the younger children.

My father's apprentice managed the business, but one day the proper authorities suddenly notified this young man that he had escaped his fate long enough. He was a Bohemian, and had been overlooked for such a length of time—ever since his presence in the city—that he had imagined himself to go free. But following this notice of conscription, he was marched off in such haste that he had not even time to come to us with the news. We, however, knew well enough where to look for him, and I tried to get a few parting words with him when I carried to him a bundle of his clothes and belongings. I saw him among the other soldiers with a musket on his back, and as I said farewell to him I also said farewell to Austria as the land of my allegiance.

As it happened his fate helped to settle mine. My mother began to worry over my conscription; I was now past fourteen. Austria was a land of bribery, and the oppressed people thought

Digitized by Google

it no harm to evade tyranny in any way possible. Friends of influence were again called to our aid, and I was secured a passport for one year's leave of absence to visit Germany, where my father's people (so my mother trusted) would find means to prolong my stay after the time had expired. I set out for Germany, traveling on foot, carrying my heavy baggage. I got a lift in a vehicle, something like our stage, as far as Linz; from there I walked but a little distance before another vehicle gave me a lift as far as Braunau on the Inn River. Here was the Austrian boundary line. Into Bavaria I had the company of a party of seed peddlers, also traveling on foot, who made the way lively until we separated beyond Munich. Then I again jogged on by myself until I came to Ulm on the boundary of Würtemberg, and there I was fortunate enough to meet up with wagoners from my father's town of Rottenburg, who were hauling bark to Ulm from the Black Forest. They gave me a lift for fifty-five miles, until I was set down at my aunt's door in Rottenburg on midnight of the same day that saw us leave Ulm.

Owing to the lateness of the hour my relatives were not aroused to receive me. I had a very good feather bed in a loft, and slept sound till morning, when I was wakened by my aunt to be ushered at once into the presence of numerous cousins of my own age. They talked to me all together and in the Suabian dialect which I found difficulty in understanding and mastering for replies; but an uncle came to my rescue, addressing me in High German, and after that I was able to hold my own. They led me around to meet about a hundred relations. I saw my grandmother, a very old woman, she must have been over ninety, and yet she was in the habit of walking a mile to early mass of mornings.

My father's brother Jacob gave me a home. He was a tanner, of course, carrying on the business on such a scale as it could be done there. But his shop, half a mile from the house and on the banks of the Neckar River, could hardly be called a tan-yard. There were forty or fifty tanners in that town each conducting his own shop, and not one of them had use regularly for a journeyman. My uncle employed no assistant, and he could have picked from any number of regularly bred master tanners, ready to work, had he needed one. Under the customs, trades-unions, or laws

Digitized by Google

of the country, an individual who had not served a regular apprenticeship to a trade was not allowed to work at it, except that a son was always considered an initiated journeyman in the trade of his father. My people were all well to do, and my uncle was wealthy with no children of his own. I became a favorite with him and his wife. They gave me money to spend, bought me books, and my uncle procured me admission to the public libraries and the reading-room. I had a comfortable home and no work, but nominally I was supposed to be growing up in the ancestral business, a tanner. The town was not without advantages, though a small place of no progress. Noted baths at a short distance made it the resort of strangers now and then, and the ancient university of Tübingen was only six miles away, with one of its branches in the town. Professors and students frequented the streets, and I became acquainted with them, as also with members of a higher class than my own. I had every opportunity given me for study and improvement.

Nor was the condition of the country at this time an unfavorable one for a quiet and comfortable future for any one disposed to it. The government of Würtemberg was decidedly fair and liberal. The people were honest; I heard of no crime. It was revolutionary times; the insurrection of 1830 drove the Bourbons from the throne of France, the North German States forced changes in their governments, Poland revolted against Russia, France sent troops to Rome to protect the pope, and the Austrians quelled petty revolutions in Italy; yet through it all Würtemberg and Baden, the two extreme southwestern German States, declared themselves satisfied with their rulers and system of government, and put down every attempt of the agitators. Once the students of the University of Tübingen made patriotic speeches in behalf of the unification of Germany; they were immediately dispersed by the citizens. Jestingly this was called our revolution. The condition of the times in Würtemberg was good.

But I had set my plans for a future in the new world, and I still looked forward to realizing them. I said little about the matter to my relatives because I knew well what their views would be; they would tell me that no good could come of straying away from the home place—that a son should live as his father before him—that my own father had not long prospered

Digitized by Google

in departing from the customs of his ancestors. An uncle was often cited to me, or to any of the young members of the connection, who, bolder than was necessary, took a fancy to do something not in accordance with old tradition. Our uncle Caspar, we were informed, had gone off soldiering for the mere liking of it, preferring that life of adventure to the tanner's. In consequence, where was he now? killed at the battle of Hohenlinden! I do not suppose that any one of my four older aunts had ever been ten miles from the native town in all their lives. They held minutely to all ancient usages, wore gold and silver caps and costly national costumes, and I remember were particularly down on one of the cousins for dressing *French fashion,* as they called it, with high-heeled shoes and other innovations in style permitted by the growing prosperity of her father, a brother-in-law in the family.

It was an old world town in old world times. At that day there was not a railway on the continent of Europe. England had a few short lines, and at Vienna eight or ten years before I had heard talk of one to be built in the near future, which had nevertheless not been built up to this time. After I came away from Vienna, and just before leaving Würtemberg, I read of the first steamboat being launched on the Danube, but by the awkwardness of the pilot it was run aground and made useless. I heard of one on a lake in Switzerland, and perhaps there may have been some others. When later I was in France I found five dingy steamboats on the Seine running between Paris and Havre; but while the distance between the two places by water is about 250 miles, and 160 by land, it took the boats four or five days to make it, and the stage only twenty-three hours. Although charging higher for passage, the latter was the cheaper way, since the cost of living in France was high. My astonishment may be imagined when, on my arrival direct from Havre, I found forty or fifty clean-looking boats lying along the wharfs of the Mississippi. I formed the opinion that the steamboats on the waters of the Mississippi alone outnumbered the same kind of craft in Europe fifty to one.

About the beginning of the year 1831 my uncle took sick, and in the latter part of April he died. He had talked of making me his heir, but had not done so, and I with a great many others

Digitized by Google

came in for a share in his property. Though the time of my leave of absence from Austria had expired, nothing was said of my return home. My mother had remarried, and was now troubled over the fact that my younger brothers were approaching the age of military service, which I so far had escaped but which I must expect should I return home. I had spoken of my determination to go to America. Before his death my uncle had known something of my desire and had neither sanctioned nor forbidden me to consider it. My aunt-in-law now declared that if go I must I should have the means.

The passport system of Germany was the great difficulty in the way. I might have remained in Rottenburg any length of time, though my permission was for one year only, but the authorities could not pass me on farther west but only toward home. The mayor of the town, a friend of my uncle and well disposed toward me, being the proper person to address on the subject, was interviewed, and declared that no notice would be taken of my staying in Rottenburg instead of returning home, but as to my going farther he could only endorse me as of good character during my stay. As it was really his duty to send me back to Austria, now that my time was out, I could not complain. A kinsman of my aunt-in-law, a man of much influence in the town, now appealed to the district magistrate, and the latter made a suggestion: he said that with my character properly endorsed by the authorities any gentleman of note, traveling in his own carriage, could take me along as one of his retinue to Strassburg, and there I could easily buy a passport under the new liberal system of the French. He stated further for my benefit that his brother-in-law, Colonel De Wind, a retired pensioned French officer living in Rottenburg, went to Strassburg every year to draw his pension in person. My friend then went to Colonel De Wind. He was a monarchist, though drawing a pension from France, objected to revolutions, the changes of the times, and liberal ideas in general, and did not want to help anyone on the way to a country teeming, as France was considered to do then, with all such things. But at last he reluctantly consented to take me with him, and gave the date of his departure. It was now almost a year since my uncle's death.

I went around to all my relatives and took leave of old and

Digitized by Google

young, friend and foe. I found myself considerably richer, too, when I had gone the rounds; for each of the older ones gave me a crown thaler according to the time-honored custom, which required a present to be made to any young member of the family marrying or leaving on a long journey. A hundred florins had been made up for me, but at the last moment when I was departing down the steps from my uncle Jacob's house, having said good-by to my aunt-in-law, that kindest of relatives followed me with her basket of coin and begged me to take more, as she feared I was not sufficiently provided for such a long journey. I did not take more, but assured her that I had enough.

2. The Journey to America, 1832

We set off in fine style on the morning of the 5th of April, 1832. I was under the protection of a sprig of the nobility, and his liveried servants rode outside on horseback, I inside with him. Our conversation of that day is fresh in my memory. Colonel De Wind thought I was doing a very wrong-headed thing in going to France, "a country," he repeated, "of revolutionary changes and liberal ideas." I told him I wanted only to get through France and on to America. He said, "Well, if that is the case, you hurry on; there may be a counter revolution in Paris at any moment." Louis Philippe was then on the throne of France, and remained there sixteen years longer before the revolution came. Colonel De Wind had a favorable opinion of the Americans, whom he considered a settled people like the English. The French, he informed me, were more likely to demand whether I had means to support myself than a passport. I told him that I not only had the money to carry me through France but also a certificate to prove that I had an interest in the estate of my grandmother, and also of my uncle. We crossed the line between Würtemberg and Baden on a mountain after dark, and the next morning about five o'clock reached Offenburg. I remember the beautiful town of Offenburg distinctly, and also a little experience I got there. The Colonel stopped to remain the day and night with friends, and told me to go on in the coach with the horses and servants to an inn. Being the only occupant of the carriage when it reached the inn, I was received with many flourishes and all the

Digitized by Google

courtesies due a gentleman traveling with his own equipage. I paid, too, like a gentleman, when the bill was presented at my departure.

No *gendarme* or other official asked for a pass until we got near the Rhine. The Colonel informed me that I must now ride outside so that in case any questions were asked I could be passed as one of his retinue. At the bridge the German officers came out to meet us and to know who we were. The Colonel gave his name and rank, and bows and smiles passed us onto the bridge. A like course was pursued by the French officers on the other side, and I was out of Germany.

I ate dinner with Colonel De Wind in Strassburg, and then shook hands with him. He lectured me to the last as to how I should conduct myself if I fell in with revolutionary movements. An hour later I took the stage for Paris and traveled day and night. A passport was not demanded at Metz, the official accepting instead the recommendation of character furnished me by the Rottenburg authorities, and so I reached Paris.

I knew that the cholera was raging in Paris; the fact had been used as an argument against my going there. As we entered the city the stage was met every few hundred yards by squads of men bearing corpses, coffinless on planks, covered with sheets. Broad daylight though it was, sometimes the procession would be followed by a man with a lantern, "for the soul of the departed to find Heaven by." At intervals black wagons were seen with numbers of coffins in them, and followed by mourners on foot and in carriages; and again the dead of the nobles would go by carried in ornamental caskets with draped horses and mourners in carriages. On account of these processions over an hour was taken up in reaching the *Messagerie Royal,* or Royal Depot for Stages. Here the confusion was something like that of our own railroad stations at the present day, and I was amazed at the number of people anxious to show me hotels and sights of the city. I followed a German Jew to a boarding house, where I thought myself fortunate in getting enough beef and bread to dine on without wine for a franc. I was aware that a customer not ordering wine was hardly considered worth his trouble in France, where a man is, or was, charged three francs for his dinner including a bottle of wine, which he paid for whether he tasted it or not. As for

Digitized by Google

me, I was no winebibber. I even had a distaste for the beer of my native land, and had incurred the censure of patriotic countrymen in Würtemberg for not being one of them in this respect.

With the cholera at its height, with over two thousand deaths a day, Paris was somewhat dull and the much talked of counter revolution a hoax, and I left after a few days. I found the cholera ahead of me at Rouen, and got on quickly to Havre, from which place the American brig *Motion,* owned in Baltimore, was to sail in a few days for New Orleans. As an objective point in the United States I considered New Orleans better than New York; from the first mentioned, if I should not like the United States, I could go more quickly into Mexico, the land toward which my inclination was most set at that time. The fare, too, was fifty francs less to New Orleans than to New York, though New Orleans was fifteen hundred miles farther. So to New Orleans I engaged passage—steerage—at once. The brig I think brought cotton to France, and not getting any other freight to carry back arranged to take passengers. Of these there were perhaps one hundred and more, German and French. No trouble as to passports came up, and we sailed out with the rising tide at eleven o'clock on the morning of the 18th of April.

Now that I am done with Europe, a few statements as to how I was placed when I left there. With nothing to expect from my native Austria but despotism, I felt little regret in leaving; I had ever been considered an alien in Würtemberg though that country, I admit, had a free government as compared with other parts of Germany. But it has been a matter of much regret to me that I came away without seeing my mother. She was in distressed circumstance, too, when I last heard from her while in Würtemberg. My letters to her had to be directed to the care of an old friend, a school teacher, who was helping the family and teaching my youngest brother. But hatred of Austrian despotism had been early instilled into me; to return home meant but to submit to it. After reaching the United States, before coming to Texas, I sought a priest with the intention of asking him to take some letters home to my mother; I had heard that he was on the eve of departure for Vienna; but he met me sharply, lecturing me on my not coming to church, and I, with my temper up, left him without asking the favor. Later in Texas, I

Digitized by Google

tried to get letters through to my mother in Vienna, but I have never heard from her. It was not an easy thing for one settled on the Texas frontier to communicate with other parts of North America at that time. I did get a letter through to Würtemberg, for the answer came, with no reference to my mother, but with much concern from some of my kin folks who feared I should claim what I was entitled to in the way of property there. I never troubled myself again to communicate with Würtemberg.

Americans have been surprised at my association here with Americans alone, and regarding the German not as a fellow-countryman, but simply according to his behavior as a citizen of the United States or of Texas; but the fact is that I left the whole of that land, Austria and Germany, deeming that I owed no allegiance to either. Germany treated me as a foreigner, and one to be returned at the demand of her ally Austria. At that time Austrian influence prevailed over Germany and Prussia. Now, this is entirely changed, and I note also that the Americans have found out, too, that an Austrian is not a German.

On the voyage over everybody on board except the sailors immediately became seasick, and before night of the first day it was ascertained that something worse than seasickness was with us, namely, cholera. There was no physician on board; the passengers were poor people, badly provided, and had no idea where they should go after arriving at New Orleans. One German family was on the way to Cincinnati to meet a kinsman; a French family on board had a cousin in St. Louis. Two of the passengers, Germans, once in the French service, had been at sea before as prisoners of war on an English vessel.

The ship had sailed from New Orleans with a crew consisting of captain, mate, supercargo, eight sailors, and a black cook. One of the sailors died at Havre; another deserted there; and now on the return voyage there were really only four because two of the remaining six were drunk and these two were soon among the dead of the cholera. I made myself of service, and for the whole of the way was employed to issue wood and supplies and to clean up the ship inside. Not one of the ship's company could speak any other language than English, except the supercargo, who was a Hollander and spoke a dialect of the German not easily understood by the Germans on board—all from the southern part of

Digitized by Google

Germany. This supercargo had also learned French grammar and a few complimentary words in that language, but could not convey one practical idea to the French on board. Of the passengers, not one, French or German, could speak English except myself. My pronunciation was very faulty, but I knew the grammar and orthography, and the captain soon discovered that I was the best medium of communication with the passengers. When we found any difficulty in understanding each other's spoken words, the same written immediately made all clear. For my services as interpreter the captain took me to the cabin for my meals.

It was decidedly a gloomy time, with continued rough sea, contrary winds necessitating constant tacking, sickness and death, and the steerage Catholic people spending more time in praying than in trying to better their condition. However, after a time the region of the trade winds was reached and prospects brightened. Now, too, an addition to our company was found in the shape of two men on board who had paid no passage. They had been smuggled in and hidden away by the two drunken sailors already fallen victims to the cholera. A bag of bread had lasted the stowaways for this length of time. One was a German of trifling character, the other a Polander who spoke French, and was now put to work and became a sailor before the voyage was over.

During the first days of June, while we were traveling on at the rate of ten miles an hour, the wind turned to a gale from the southeast and on the night of the 6th to 7th of June we were treated to a hurricane. The ship was dismantled to her lower joints, and the rigging, falling overboard on the leeward side, dragged the ship nearly on her side. The tool chest had gone overboard and there was a demand for some instrument with which to cut the rigging holding the mast and puncheon on the side of the vessel. The Polander and I called to two passengers who we knew had chests of tools, but all the people were busy praying for their lives, and the call was unheeded. I found a chest, the Polander kicked off the lock, and we obtained a hatchet and drawing knife and in a few minutes the ship went clear. The waves were mountain high, but Captain Voight declared us out of danger, as the craft was too strong when not in contact with banks or rocks to leak, and the wind could have no effect on her while her mast stood.

Digitized by Google

We ran over the Bahama Banks on the eve of the 9th of June and approached the coast of America. Observations could not be counted certain for longitude and we spoke a British schooner from Barbadoes to Nassau. A few days later near the coast of Florida a Spanish captain called on us for like information, saying also that he could speak no English. Captain Voight could speak a little Spanish but preferred to give me the trumpet and I answered. The next day we passed the capes of Florida, and sailing on with moderate weather found ourselves on the morning of the 21st of June at the mouth of the Mississippi.

It was a matter of much surprise to me to note the liberality of the American custom house officials in taking Captain Voight's word for it that he had nothing on board but two crates of crockery which he would report to the custom house at New Orleans, and poorer class passengers with common baggage. In all there was a delay of perhaps fifteen minutes. He delivered a list of the passengers and casualties, and polite speeches and compliments passed him on his way, whereas in most places in Europe half a day would have been taken up in examinations. The wind blew us up the Mississippi rapidly and we overtook and passed a British vessel in full sail. This gave me my first admiration for American ships. On the night of the 22nd of June we dropped anchor opposite New Orleans and fastened to another ship which was fast to the bank of the Mississippi.

3. Getting Settled, 1832-1834

The sickly season was just setting in at New Orleans. Added to apprehension of yellow fever was fear of the immediate breaking out of cholera. All who could do so were getting away from the town as fast as possible. The captain, whose wife was in the place, left the ship on the morning of our arrival, but my funds now being low I stayed on with the mate for another night. And I was not alone in staying; about forty other passengers remained for like reason. The second evening I went on board a steamboat for Louisville, but on account of low water I never got there. I was surprised at the cheap rates: four dollars for the whole distance, and two or three dollars I found would purchase provisions for two weeks.

Digitized by Google

We stopped a short while at Natchez and Memphis, but came to a halt at Paducah, fifty miles from the mouth of the Ohio and directly at the mouth of the Tennessee. Here I made the acquaintance of an American tanner from Florence, Alabama, who, questioning me as to my profession, discovered that I was something of a tanner, and told me I could get good wages for that work at Florence. I had no intention of following the tanning business, and said so. I told him I wanted to learn to farm. Being a good mathematician, I could engage in engineering or surveying, or could clerk in a store, where I thought my knowledge of languages might be of service. He advised me to stick to my trade, and several gentlemen bystanders endorsed him therein. But I paid little attention to the advice. I determined to go on to Cincinnati, since I had come so far, and seek employment there, in order to raise funds. I thought it didn't matter where I went to learn Americans and American ways and to perfect myself in the language, but already my inclination was to live in the South. The tanner cordially invited me to Alabama.

At Cincinnati I immediately fell in with a German, and was carried to a German boarding house, where I engaged board at two dollars a week. I knew that I must go to work at once as my money was spent. I found work the first hour, the old and hated tanyard work, at seventy-five cents a day. I made four and a half a week, and saved two and a half, as I spent nothing outside of board. I bought no clothes; the fine ones made up or purchased for me on my leaving home outlasted my travels. Later some of them were traded in Texas for cattle; a costly broadcloth coat which had been my father's I traded for a sow, and the sow died immediately.

While in Cincinnati I heard for the first time of temperance societies and of religious sects which prohibited strong drink. I had been ridiculed at home for my dislike of all alcoholic drinks, and here in America I found it was a recommendation to me; but I must add that Americans drank stronger drinks, and to less advantage than the Germans. Still I took up the idea that this was the greatest boon yet of American liberty—a man's being able to refuse to drink with his comrades without being laughed at. I heard much of religion and of different denominations, but I never entered a church in Cincinnati, except the time when I

Digitized by Google

hunted up the priest to carry my letters home. I have never come in contact with a Catholic priest since then, fifty-four years ago, nor spoken to one except once, not from antipathy, but just through a strange chance. The one exception was in San Antonio, where I found a priest engaged in chicken-fighting in front of a church, and I remarked to him in Spanish that men of his profession in my country did not engage in such business as that.

When I had saved ten dollars for the expenses of a trip down the river and up the Tennessee, I went to Florence, Alabama, and was received by my friend the tanner, who introduced me to another, McKinney, and he engaged me at eighteen dollars a month with board and every other expense paid. I was entirely among Americans, and liked the association, but would not engage to remain a year as McKinney wanted me to do.

By this time I had heard much of Texas, a land barely known in Europe. I had learned now that it was a separate province of Mexico, and my thoughts turned to it all the more for the many contradictory statements I heard concerning it. On the 23rd of March, 1833, I bade adieu to my new friends and sailed down the Tennessee and the Mississippi on one of the longest boats, the *Sampson,* that floated on Mississippi waters, carrying underneath and on deck and in tow 4,000 bales of cotton, the largest cargo of that kind so far ever brought to New Orleans.

The only craft I found going to Texas soon was a schooner, the *Sabine,* commanded by Captain Brown, and I engaged passage at once, fifteen dollars to Brazoria, to eat in the cabin but to sleep on deck, a thing which numbers had to do as the cabin was small and full. I saw little of the town of New Orleans, but got my first glimpse of a railroad there, one leading from the city a short distance to Lake Ponchartraine.

On the fair sailing voyage from New Orleans and Mobile to Texas I made the acquaintance of two noted Texans, returning from business trips to New Orleans. One was General Somervell, with whom I fell in repeatedly afterward in war times in Texas, and the other, David Ayers, then merchandising at Cole's Landing, afterward well known for years as the editor of the *Christian Advocate* at Galveston. The latter gentleman told me much of the advantages of Texas, but those advantages for the next twelve months I failed to find.

Digitized by Google

Brazoria at this time was perhaps the most prominent shipping point in Texas. Galveston had no inhabitants. Harrisburg was a little town to which schooners and small craft brought goods from New Orleans. Neither Houston nor Galveston was laid off till after the battle of San Jacinto. Matagorda on the Colorado and Anahuac on the Trinity were smaller shipping points. The Brazos was deemed navigable to Bell's Landing, ten miles above Brazoria.

During the revolution of the year 1832 the Texans took sides with Santa Anna, and expelled the Mexican garrison at the mouth of the Brazos, as well as all others in Texas east of the San Antonio River. After this engagement in June, 1832, the town of Velasco was laid off near the site of the battle, and it now had about fifty inhabitants. The houses were mere shanties with one unfinished two-story building—its sides half open. The making of salt from water obtained from salt wells near the beach comprised its business, and this was conducted on a very small scale by the two brothers Porter.

With John W. Porter then just out from Tennessee I afterward formed an acquaintance to last a lifetime, and a little later I made salt with him at Velasco, but on the occasion of my first visit to Velasco I saw little of the place. We delayed half a day putting out goods, and then sailed up to Brazoria, where we arrived the last day of April, 1833.

Brazoria was more advanced than Velasco, though surrounded by Brazos bottom. It must have had forty or fifty houses—one half completed, built of pine lumber brought from New Orleans or Mobile. I met two young men in Brazoria who told me much of Mexican affairs, and that at this particular time Santa Anna and his government were rather approved of by the Texans. These two young men were John A. Wharton and E. M. Pease, the latter afterward governor of Texas.

Transportation to the interior was by oxwagon—four to six yoke to one wagon, conveying three to five thousand pounds. The commerce, of course, was small. People near the coast could keep themselves moderately well supplied. Farther in the interior (and I might say that on the Brazos San Felipe was about the center settlement) imported articles could be obtained only when some trader had been below and brought up a wagon load, which was

Digitized by Google

soon sold out. The roads were mere openings in the woods and tracks of earlier wagons on the prairies. The business of transportation was carried on by men who owned their outfits, or by others working for the owners for one-half the profits. Sometimes men well off and well circumstanced followed the business from the love of it, liking for camp life and such company as was obtained by it. In winter and in early spring, when the roads were very wet, business would almost suspend. It was at any time hazardous. Two or more wagons traveling in company would never separate so long as they were going in the same direction but one would wait for all and vice versa; if the carelessness of a wagoner lost oxen at night the whole caravan of wagons waited for the lost to be found. Oxen, turned out hobbled or perhaps free to graze at night, would sometimes wander off a few miles. Perhaps another pair would go astray while the first was being hunted. I have known wagoners to camp a week in one place, delayed by the straying of oxen, and similar delays might occur more than once before a destination was reached. Such transportation was little changed until annexation.

On the morning of the first of May, in company with other travelers, I threw my baggage on an ox wagon and we only got out to the Brazos bottom, where we stopped with a large encampment of wagons delayed by such a cause as I have mentioned. We remained for several days till a party of Mexicans with horses for sale joined the encampment, when some of us bought horses on which to proceed. The average price of a Mexican horse, since erroneously called Spanish, was ten dollars, which had to be paid down to the Mexican in gold or silver. An American asked double the price, but would take part in paper or trade, or give credit. My companions had with them saddles of the old American or English style, considered worse than none here in Texas on the sharp-backed Mexican horses. With a rope around the nose of my animal, I rode bareback carrying a blanket and valise. In two days we arrived at San Felipe, where I obtained a saddle. The country was extremely wet, the watercourses overflowed, and Indians, said to be a hundred years old, declared the Brazos had never been so high before.

I proceeded toward the Colorado. I remained a day with a German named Fordtran at his home. But finding the country

Digitized by Google

toward the Colorado impassable I returned to the Brazos. Near Brazoria I waited a week in the same wagon camp where I had been delayed before. From Brazoria Captain Brown and I proceeded to the mouth of the Brazos in a canoe. In a very undecided state of mind, half inclined to try Tampico or Vera Cruz, I engaged with John W. Porter to work at common labor, salt-making at Velasco. Porter with his brother was only temporarily engaged in salt-making; he expected to acquire the means to provide himself with a wagon and team to move to Cole's Settlement in the fall. Cole's Settlement was then the highest of any note on the Brazos.

I had been at work about a week when I took the bilious fever of the country, and hardly knew what was going on for ten days or so. In that time the cholera had also visited the place, and four or five people were dead from it. I was not equal to work again for more than a month and could not clear my board. But Porter encouraged me and others as well. Porter held out the hope of the upper country for me for the winter and assured me I would get acclimated there, and offered to teach me farming. From that time until his death in 1846 as county judge of Burleson County we remained friends, and I have ever remembered him and his family with gratitude. Right here I should like to express my appreciation of the people who were the early settlers of Texas, as I found them. They were honest and cordial and neighborly. Most of them were Americans; the greater number came from Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas. Though with very different stages of intelligence among them, at least two-thirds could read and write. Farming and stock raising formed their chief occupations, but the farming was carried on in a very primitive way, except near the coast, where there were slave owners. Families were very comfortably established in double log houses, with rock chimneys and plank floors; the planks were sawed by hand. There were also log cabins with the bark on the logs; one room harbored the whole family, and comers and goers. The Texas wind found the cracks between the logs and sometimes helped the fire to set the log chimney ablaze. When the log chimney conspired with the fire to roast the occupants on a cold day, nothing remained to do but to climb up on the roof and

Digitized by Google

throw down the chimney, thus placing the small room still more at the mercy of the icy norther.

Schoolhouses of logs were found in the thicker settlements; but seldom was school kept continuously in them for a year. The same houses, or the shade of a tree, did for religious services; preachers of all denominations were passing and repassing. But with the exception of the Mexican element there seemed very few Catholics. The Mexican constitution of 1824 in substance varied little from that of the United States, except that it required any one desiring citizenship, or having citizenship, to become a Catholic. For this reason the formality of being baptized into the Catholic Church was gone through with at an early day by the first settlers; but they were only nominal Catholics, and the practice had been abandoned ere this time.

About the middle of September, 1833, Porter with his family started in the oxwagon he had bought. I had already gone up to Bell's Landing, having helped so far on a flat boat which carried freight between Velasco and that place, and I joined them there. We were two weeks getting from Bell's Landing to San Felipe, a distance of fifty miles, owing to the swampy country and constant rains. We then made forty miles in three or four days, arriving at the twenty acres of land and small house which Porter was to rent at Cole's Settlement. I was still more or less sick with the bilious fever, and it was considered no time to begin farming. So we each sought some other employment, but before we could get work it was found that the place we rented had been sold by the owner. Porter had rented it from an agent. The purchaser was come from a distance to take possession. Our agent had been legally authorized to rent it, but the owner lived at a distance and sold at a distance, and so we were two families both desiring possession. The new owner compromised, and agreed to build a house for us to live in until we found some other place.

Porter wished to settle in Robertson's colony, as the law preventing North Americans settling there had been repealed and we now had sufficient information about the country no longer to fear Indians near the San Antonio road and about the Brazos. The prospect of obtaining land, however, was small. We went prospecting at Christmas time, and found an old man living ten

Digitized by Google

miles below the boundary of the colony who had been there thirteen years and raised his large family there. He had a league of land and an unfinished house of one room. Ten acres of the land in the Brazos bottom had been overflowed that year and his corn drowned out. His force in his own family of four grown sons would have been sufficient for all the land he had in use, but he offered us one-fourth of his cleared land free for clearing as much more. This would be only five acres for us, but it seemed our best chance to get land, and the Brazos bottom was considered certain to make forty or fifty bushels to the acre. We could at least make a start so as to have grain near at hand when moving into the new colony. Besides there was a dilapidated field nearby which we could use free by rebuilding the fence washed down against the trees. So we accepted the offer, moved some time in January, 1834, and went to work, and in a manner carried out our contract during the year. The labor came awkward to me, as I had never done anything of the kind before; besides I was sick the whole summer, still not having recovered from the acclimating bilious attack, and the place was considered a sickly one. Porter moved his family in August to Tenoxtitlan.

I traded my clothes brought from Germany for cattle and hogs; I have mentioned the coat, which was my father's in Vienna; the sow I bought with it died at once, and a horse which I had traded for corn went the same way. Still as a result of my trading I had a very good start of hogs in the fall. Porter, too, accumulated cattle for articles he could trade. He gave an ox for a sow valued at five dollars, a feather bed for three cows and calves, a gun for a mare, and another gun for a cow, calf and yearling. Buying and selling was generally by exchange of property. To a certain extent a cow and calf had come to be used as legal tender for ten dollars. If a man wished to say he had paid fifty dollars for a yoke of steers, very likely he said, even if he had paid in money, that he gave five *cows and calves* for them. The observation that cows and calves were ten dollar bills and hogs and chickens silver change was common.

The government at that time demanded no taxes. Anything to be done for the common good was done voluntarily. Every man of family arriving in the country was entitled to a league of land (4428 acres), by paying about fifty dollars on an average for sur-

Digitized by Google

veying, seventeen and a half dollars for title, and a dollar and twenty cents to the government for every labor (177 acres), in which last he had six years' time. An unmarried man was entitled to one-quarter of a league, with expenses proportionate. But there were plenty of men who did not care to have so much land as a league, and plenty of others who were ready to contract to pay all expenses for half the land; so such bargains as this were often made.

The country, divided out in an early day into colonies, was being settled by colonies of a certain number of families contracted for by the empresario. The latter received five leagues of land for every one hundred families settled. Austin's colony already numbered some eight or ten hundred families, and comprised the country in most part between the Trinity and Colorado Rivers from the coast to the San Antonio road. It did not quite reach the San Antonio road, there being a boggy, swampy stream, the Yeagua, which cut off a territory of about fifty miles southwestward and thirty miles southeastward. At the time I came to Texas but three families lived in that territory, and there was but one settlement north of the San Antonio road on the west side of the Brazos. There was a small colony on the Colorado, mostly confined to the river on both sides, extending about thirty miles above the San Antonio road.

The settlement on the west side of the Brazos above the San Antonio road, spoken of above, was known as Tenoxtitlan and had for some time until recently been a Mexican garrison. As a result of the revolution of the year before it had been evacuated, the Mexican soldiers going west. When I arrived there about a half dozen Mexican families occupied the place. Some of them considered themselves settled and claimed land in the neighborhood. About a half dozen American families were also there. They sheltered themselves in the Mexican barracks, while waiting for something to turn up.

Under the Mexican colony system a party of land speculators from Tennessee, headed by Sterling C. Robertson, made a contract with the Mexican Government some time before this to settle a colony on both sides of the Brazos immediately above Austin's colony. The boundaries of the colony were fixed by contract as "beginning where the San Antonio road crosses the

Digitized by Google

Trinity, thence following said road westward to the ridge dividing the waters of the Brazos and Colorado, thence following that ridge to the Cross Timbers, thence a northeasterly course to the Trinity, thence down the Trinity to the beginning." The north boundary of this colony was imaginary; there is no way of defining the Cross Timbers; though there is a quantity of timbered land it is not a regularly delineated belt as was then imagined. Robertson was beginning to bring on his settlers when the Mexicans passed a law preventing North Americans settling in the new colony. This interfered with the settlement, and the contractors had only six years for its completion.

Austin and Williams made a contract with the Mexican Government, proposing to settle the country with Europeans but failed; then they permitted the location of a number of large grants awarded to Mexicans for military service. During the revolution of 1832, Santa Anna had promised to repeal the law prohibiting the settling of North Americans; he did so. Robertson had the colony returned to him, and the actual settling of that large district now comprising nearly forty counties began.

Porter finally determined to settle on a stream crossing the San Antonio road, but as there was but little good land at that place he decided to locate only a part of his headright there. We gathered our crop in September, built pens and shelter at the new place, and moved that fall, 1834.

4. Surveyor and Indian Fighter, 1834

I was still undecided where to settle or what to engage in, but just then I fell in with Alexander Thomson, an old man. He had come out with Robertson and was partly interested in the colony, but had lived in Austin's colony up to this time. He was now living ten miles northwest of Porter's new place. He called himself a jack of all trades, and was able to work at seven different ones, and, having the authority to do so, expected to go into that of surveying. He took for his district to survey into leagues a section of the country twenty-five miles square, west of the Brazos and north of the San Antonio road, and offered me the chance of business with him, at first nominally as chain carrier. Another man, Scott, ran the compass, but quit at Christmas after survey-

Digitized by Google

ing twelve or thirteen leagues of land. The section of country he had chosen to operate in was in no way desirable. Much of it was poor land, and some of the better portions were already covered by Mexican grants located under Austin. As a surveyor could not get pay for work unless the land was taken by a settler who paid, the business did not make expenses for Thomson. We did little work after Christmas and that little was done by me running Thomson's compass. I located my own headright from the Mexican Government of one-fourth of a league at that time. While nominally Thomson's surveyor, I lived with him waiting for business, which up to the first of May did not amount to more than two weeks of actual surveying. But I was not idle; I worked for him on his farm at the rate of seventeen dollars a month.

There were two very different kinds of Indians in Texas: Caddos, half civilized from Louisiana, mixed with remnants of other tribes from farther east, and the wild Indians, also immigrants, but of a much earlier date than the Caddos. Among the wild Indians the Comanches were the most powerful; they claimed the sovereignty of Texas, and treated all other tribes as vassals. They regarded the whites on the Colorado and west of it as a different race from those on the Brazos and in the east generally. In fact, they regarded the whites, like themselves, as divided up into tribes, and so made war on the western whites while they considered the eastern ones their friends. The Caddos were much better informed, and knowing the difficulties that might arise from the wild Indian depredations, they did not themselves go to the Colorado River. But the people on the Colorado believed that the Caddos harbored their enemies and traded with them for stolen horses; in their vexation they even accused the Brazos whites of such conduct. Thus it happened that, when a party of wild Indians before July the first, 1835, came far down the Colorado and killed a man, the pursuing settlers were indifferent as to whether they found Caddos or wild Indians. Unluckily they came upon a party of Caddos, fell upon them, and killed six. This brought about a critical condition; the Brazos people were answerable to the Caddos for the deeds of any whites, but still must take sides with the whites against the wild Indians.

Small parties of men from the Colorado and the lower country of the Brazos were out. The Brazos men captured a village on

Digitized by Google

the Trinity. A Colorado party under Captain Robert M. Coleman, about twenty-five in number, was repulsed at the Tehaucana village east of the Brazos, and there was a call for a general campaign.[2]

I enrolled in a company under John H. Moore, and about the fifth of August we reached Parker's Settlement, and were joined by Captain Coleman's company. After waiting for the swollen Navasota to run down, we marched on to the village. Texas Indians never allowed themselves to be attacked by a hundred men together; they had evacuated the village, and we had nothing to do but occupy it. We found sixty acres in corn, which was just hard enough to be gritted, and by making holes in the bottom of the tin cups we carried we fashioned graters, and supplied ourselves with bread. There were also numbers of pumpkins, watermelons, muskmelons, peas, and other vegetables, such as were then raised by Indians in their primitive agriculture.

In two days we left the place, and, going eighteen or twenty miles over the prairie, late in the afternoon we came within a mile of a belt of timber extending along the Pin Oak Creek, which empties into the Trinity. The scouts reported Indians in the timber. We were formed into line. The commander and his adjutant took as much precaution as if we were about to fight such formidable foes as Creeks, Cherokees, and Seminoles—foes the two had faced in their younger days under Jackson. After we had paraded and maneuvred for about fifteen minutes, the order was given to charge. We did so, charging two or three hundred yards, through post oak timber over boggy soil. The officers were particular to keep us in line. Then we were met by the scouts with another piece of news: the Indians were all fled—what few there had been—about half a dozen. They had taken to flight at our first demonstration. We captured a pony—one hundred strong as we were. In camping near the place that night there was much laughing over the adventure. I was riding a young horse which had been caught a colt from the mustangs, that was fiery. When the order came to charge, it darted forward ahead of all the rest, and I found myself alone in the advance. Next came McFall, who

[2]For variants of the account of this campaign, see Brown's *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, 25-26; and De Shield's Border Wars of Texas, 131, 134.

Digitized by Google

was also on a wild horse, too eager for the fray. The officers shouted to us to come back into line, but our efforts to obey were in vain. Our steeds had determined to give us a reputation for bravery which we did not deserve.[3]

A few days of marching to no purpose, of waiting for swollen streams to run down, and for bogs to become passable brought us to the conclusion that the Texas Indian could always keep out of sight of a large party. He could go ahead, keep ahead and be continually out of the way. But Colonel Moore was averse to turning back, and at last a division among us resulted. The men from the Brazos, including Coleman, Ed Burleson and others, returned. I went back with them.

This was my first experience of war in Texas; it was quite different from my ideas of the art as derived from boyhood sources; drills I had participated in at the Polytechnic, from accounts of battles around Vienna, and from such spectacles as the passing of masses of soldiery, martial music, with the dragging of cannon, and other echoes of military glory. But I fancied the campaign life here, at least the camp life, and while on this expedition I made an engagement to go out again with a surveyor to the heads of the San Gabriel and Brushy creeks. He expected to run two compasses from one camp, and to have half a dozen or more land locaters with him.

I set out from Bastrop with the surveyor, Thomas A. Graves, about the last of September. There were seventeen of us in the party, including four land speculators. We reached our destination in three days and commenced work, each compass running out a league of land a day. We intended to go farther east after surveying ten leagues, but on the last day of our stay the Indians attacked one of the parties and killed Lang, an Irishman, who ran the compass. Such occurrences were not uncommon, especially near the Colorado, and even occurred in the midst of a settlement. A party of Indians always lurked around, waiting to find a solitary man to scalp, and would then put off immediately. As they generally did put off immediately after the killing, it seemed to

[3]Later this incident gave rise to the sobriquet "The Flying Dutchman."—L. A. E.

His companions, not exactly understanding the cause of this feat and always delighting in anything that savored of courage, immediately promoted him.—De Cordova.

Digitized by Google

me there was little danger in our whole party remaining a few days longer. One man of the party attacked had escaped and brought us the news; three men to be accounted for were missing, two besides Lang. We thought the dead ought to be found and buried, and after deliberation in camp found that all the hands and one land locator, Fiske, were in favor of this course, or, at least, to remain long enough to ascertain the fate of the missing men. So after a little opposition from Graves and the other land locators, we started the next morning, not to the settlements, but to the place of attack, guided by the man who had escaped. We paused there and, after another deliberation, Graves cut the matter short by declaring he had fitted out the expedition, would have to pay the hands, and did not propose to be at unnecessary expense in public service. So we turned back. Had we gone but a few hundred yards farther we would have found Lang's body. We kept a lookout for the other missing men, and one of them we found. He was quite wild from fright, mistook us for Indians, and ran from us for some time. He had grown up in some large city, a tailor by trade, and was altogether unused to the frontier. The other man, McLellan, a little Irishman, carried a pistol and a Jacob's staff with him in flight, and escaped to the Colorado; he lived to be killed in the Alamo the following March.

We reached Hornsby's settlement rather late the next day, and there learned that the Mexicans had marched to Gonzales and demanded a cannon and other arms, that Santa Anna had issued orders to disarm us, and that war operations were fairly commenced. A general call was made on the country, the demand was resisted, and the retreating Mexicans were followed to San Antonio by the Texans. Part of the available men from the Colorado under Captain Coleman had gone to San Antonio. Edward Blackey made up a company of twenty men to go against the Indians in the vicinity of where Lang was killed. I joined him. We found Lang's body and buried it, and scouted around for some time. On our return we found that little had been going on at San Antonio; but when I returned from still another scout against the Indians the battle of Conception had been fought.

I now started to San Antonio, but stopped on the way at Bastrop to make arrangements for a horse, as mine had given out

Digitized by Google

on the last scouting expedition. I then learned that there was no probability of a speedy conflict. During the last of November and first of December men who had hurried to the scene were returning. Stopping at Captain Coleman's family, I had gone to picking cotton. That gentleman wrote home quite discouraged as to the prospect for battle, and fearful that affairs would settle without war and the country "go to ruin," as he expressed it. Having procured a horse, I took occasion to go over to Porter's and look after my property, cattle and hogs, left there. I traveled in company with several men just from San Antonio, one of whom was Major Barr, afterward postmaster-general of the Republic. I heard from them the same accounts as to the improbability of speedy war. Before I got started back from Porter's news came that San Antonio had capitulated and the Mexicans marched off.

History hints at the diversity of opinion among the leaders regarding the mode of attack, but as some of the more farseeing ones perceived that further delay would break up the army and ruin the cause they urged it forward. About the 4th of December Burleson, Milam, and Frank Johnson made a call for volunteers to attempt to take the town by surprise. There were about eight hundred or a thousand men in front of San Antonio, but less than three hundred volunteered. However, the leaders went forward and on the morning of the 5th, in cold, bad weather, they took position, gained an entrance to the town, and then by assuming the offensive began to weary down the Mexicans. Colonel Burleson, at the time commander of the whole force, remained outside to support and if necessary to reinforce the attacking party. During the succeeding night more volunteers came forward to join those in conflict; and they, making a further advance, gained a new position; and so they continued to do each day till the 8th; then by very hard fighting they gained the center of the town. All available men in camp had become engaged. General Cos proposed to evacuate the town if allowed to march off with the honors of war, arms, and the public and private property in his possession. A commission was appointed on both sides; it agreed on articles of capitulation by the terms of which the Mexicans, 1700 strong, with arms and accoutrements, marched off on parole of honor not again to fight against the constitution of 1824. A

Digitized by Google

greater part of the Texans returned to their homes. A small number of volunteers, nearly all of them just arrived from the old States and New Orleans, garrisoned the town.

A discussion has arisen of late as to whom General Cos surrendered his sword. I say there was no such surrender. When the troops were allowed to march off with all arms, of course, their general was not required to give up his sword.

And now for five or six weeks followed a kind of jubilee throughout Texas, leading to almost unpardonable carelessness. The capture of San Antonio was as much a diplomatic arrangement as a military achievement. The Mexicans engaged in the affair had preferred a more liberal course than Santa Anna might have accepted; they probably retired in hopes it would lead to a compromise. But the Texans believed they had achieved a victory that would frighten off Santa Anna and his Mexicans forever. The many immigrants into the country about this time overdid the enthusiasm even more than the older settlers. There were volunteers from the older States, destined for military service first and land speculation afterward, and many had only come to look at the country, acquire land, and return later for possession. These last, or most of them, were on their way back by the early part of February when it became known that Santa Anna had crossed the Rio Grande with seven thousand men, and was advancing rapidly, vowing death and extermination to the American race on Mexican soil. About five hundred men, principally Fannin's, remained to fall for Texas.

When Santa Anna's purpose became known, a new convention was called, which on the 2nd of March declared the independence of Texas. Houston had already been appointed commander-in-chief of the army. Travis, besieged in the Alamo with only one hundred and seventy-five men, made strong appeals for relief. Burleson and other leaders were concentrating troops as a nucleus for the army at Gonzales, and calls and appeals were made on all sides, but the response was slow. I myself was not one of the first, but I started in the early part of March and joined the army.

The Alamo fell on the 6th of March and confusion reigned.

Digitized by Google

5. At San Jacinto, 1836[4]

General Houston had retreated from Gonzales to the Colorado River to a place near where Columbus now stands. On the 20th of March about fourteen hundred men were at that place under his command. I had joined Captain Billingsly's company from Bastrop, Burleson's regiment. There was great eagerness among us to fight, but in a few days General Houston ordered the retreat to the Brazos River. This caused over four hundred men to leave us. Although we were constantly receiving volunteers the army did not number but about one thousand at San Jacinto. Seven hundred and eighty fought the battle; the rest were fifteen miles away scouting the baggage at Harrisburg.

About the first of April heavy rains set in, impeding our progress, and for nearly two weeks we were encamped in the Brazos bottom near where Hempstead now stands, while Santa Anna occupied San Felipe, and moved down the river to cross at Fort Bend. The delay had a good effect in disciplining us, and giving us information about military tactics.

We crossed the Brazos about the fourteenth, and traveled on to Harrisburg as rapidly as the state of the roads would permit. Santa Anna with a small portion of his men had really got ahead of us, and was going down the bay in the direction of Galveston. After burning Harrisburg, he met at New Washington two vessels carrying supplies for his army. Putting part of these supplies on flatboats, and part on several hundred pack mules, he again advanced up the country to meet with us at San Jacinto.

I have based my views of what took place at this time on reflections deduced afterward from that of which I was an eye witness and participant, and on positive information obtained from Mexican officers.

Santa Anna had reached Fort Bend with four thousand men, and captured the ferry boat without opposition. Although a company of Texans was stationed there under Captain Wyly Martin to watch his movements, and Captain Mosely Baker with a com-

[4]This account of the San Jacinto campaign being a rationalized one should be compared with such studies of the campaign as appear in The Quarterly, IV, 237-260, and in Bancroft, *North Mexican States and Texas*, II, 243-265.

Digitized by Google

pany from our regiment had followed him from San Felipe, they found it useless to oppose the superior numbers.

Santa Anna had made arrangements to be met, as he was met, by those vessels at New Washington without protection of any naval or land force. Of this arrangement and of Santa Anna's special maneuvre, our army seemed to have known nothing. Nor, so far as I know, has any Texas writer on the subject mentioned Santa Anna's design, or that Houston knew of such design.

With an actual force of hardly six hundred men Santa Anna left his army. In all he had perhaps a thousand with him, but the rest were only cargadores or muleteers with some four or five hundred pack mules to be loaded. His inclination for good living must have been a personal inducement for him to detach himself from his army with so small a force and go in search of it. That we captured those articles of high living is a matter of history, as also that Santa Anna knew nothing of us to be dealt with, but thought our army broken up and dispersed and that he had only to meet a few bands covering the retreat of flying Texans. He expected, too, that the Cherokees would rise further east to annihilate us. From my own observations, I am satisfied that he did not expect to meet an organized force, and was apprised of our formidable opposition only when our cannon made it known. Decidedly much of our success at that time was due to Santa Anna's voluptuousness and to his stubbornness and despotism.

He accomplished his design of getting the cargoes of the vessels. From the writings of a Mexican officer, one of his aid-de-camps whose name I have forgotten,[5] I have the information that he told the men he took with him and those he left on the Brazos that he expected to be back in a few days. He moved forward rapidly, traveling out of the bottom and swimming a bayou, and was stopped in the night by his cannon getting bogged. He was

[5]Perhaps, Pedro Delgado, whose Diary was translated and published in a pamphlet entitled: *The Battle of San Jacinto: Viewed from both an American and Mexican standpoint.* Its details and incidents as officially reported by Major General Sam Houston of the Texan Army. Also an account of the action written by Col. Pedro Delgado, of General Santa Anna's staff. V. O. King, editor. Austin, 1878. Delgado's account also appears in Linn's *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas.* New York, 1883, pages 225-246.

Digitized by Google

through unloading his vessels at New Washington late on the evening of the 19th, burned that town, and returning camped half way between it and the battle ground.

We had traveled the whole night, leaving our baggage under guard of three hundred men at Harrisburg. We reached Vince's Bayou, where there was a bridge much spoken of, two miles from the battle ground, at daylight.

I had been employed for a few days in guarding and handling quarter-master stores, but joined my company on leaving Harrisburg. From my employment in the quarter-master's department I had some privileges: I was allowed to pass about and be away from the company at times which gave me opportunity to see and note, and I know that on the morning before the day of the battle the whole staff and most all of the officers were at a loss as to where to look for Santa Anna. He had gone the same route as ourselves on the road to Lynchburg, but after crossing the bridge at Vince's Bayou turned south, and while the talk went on as to his whereabouts being unknown we were halted and arranged along the timber of Buffalo Bayou.

General Houston and some of his staff were directly in front of our company, when General Rusk came galloping up. Rusk's first words I can repeat verbatim: "Moments are ages. Santa Anna has been down to New Washington and received supplies by water. He burned the town of Washington last night, and is now advancing to meet us on his back track."

We resumed our march, crossed the bridge to a somewhat elevated point of timber on the bank of Buffalo Bayou one mile and a half above Lynchburg, and were aligned in regular military order with the artillery in the middle and the cavalry on the right. We were hidden from Santa Anna's view by a small rise in the ground and by brush in the edge of which our position was taken.

We made preparations for the attack and, somehow and in spite of some former boastings of times when Texans had whipped Mexicans five to one, we began to be a little cautious. Santa Anna, it was said, had with him the elite and veterans of Mexico, who had never been conquered. But from the trace where he left the Bayou and where he crossed another bayou, extremely boggy, we could see that his force was not stronger than ours. His boats

Digitized by Google

from New Washington, badly guarded, got ahead of him in the strong wind, and coming up close to the shore, some of our scouts, fifteen or twenty in number, surprised and captured them. We feasted from them several days in camp after the battle.

He advanced. He attempted to scatter us by a shot from his cannon, but when that was answered by our artillery, he found out the real situation, encamped his men at once on the bayou, and sent a dispatch to General Cos. General Cos for safety had been ordered to cross the Brazos River and advance slowly to protect Santa Anna on his return, and had made some little distance from the Brazos when he received Santa Anna's express. He came on immediately.

Both armies apparently went into camp on the battle field, firing cannon at each other occasionally.

There was much talk among us as to the strength and disposition of the enemy. Most of the men wanted a voice in whatever was to be done, some urging an immediate attack, but the greater number were now grown a little careful, and passed remarks to the effect that they preferred to wait some time for orders.

The firing of cannon went on at intervals, and Colonel Neill of the artillery was wounded by a grape shot during the morning. Our dinner was rather superb, gained by the capture of the boats with the supplies for the Mexicans. We were unused to flour but had it in bread that day. The coffee we couldn't parch for want of cooking utensils left at Harrisburg. We peeled off cypress bark in flakes for trays, and made the flour into a stiff dough, wound it around a stick with a piece of tallow or fat beef on top, and roasted the whole on top of the fire. It was a change from our rough living on half-cooked beef and corn ground by ourselves. Perhaps, it was that meal that made us more eager for operations to begin.

Apprehensions were expressed that General Houston did not intend to fight there, and might retreat further. To such a course general resistance was announced. By his long retreat, Houston had made himself extremely unpopular, especially with the western men who in consequence of it had had their property destroyed, houses burned, and land devastated. But about 3 o'clock the cavalry was thrown forward for a reconnoissance; our regiment with

Digitized by Google

one cannon followed a short distance to cover the reaction, and took position in a small grove at the head of a shallow ravine on a plane inclined toward the Mexican camp, and in full view of it. Our cavalry came into action, moving from right to left, then turned and passed back on our left, carrying with them one of our men severely wounded. The Mexicans made a deploy as if to advance on us, but, after the firing of several cannon on each side without any effect on us, retreated to their position. We, too, returned to camp.

This maneuvre disclosed the Mexican strength as considerably inferior to ours, and their position as very badly chosen for their defense. The cry for attacking them became more unanimous, with the determination to retreat no further; and it was only by the advice and example of a sprinkle of old men among us, some of whom had been in the Revolutionary war and that of 1812, that we kept order and discipline to await the developments of next day.

The night passed off comparatively quiet, with occasional cannon shots on either side, the enemy's going far over us, as perhaps ours did over them, for their position was now in a bayou slightly protected by a low rise of the ground three hundred yards in front.

At daylight General Cos arrived, which doubled the strength of our enemies. This arrival was looked for by our principal officers and might have been easily prevented, but was permitted and an effort was made to keep the knowledge from us for fear it might intimidate us. But we knew very well of the reinforcement and were all the more goaded to fight on account of it. It had the effect, however, of making us calm and determined and of reinstating order. By noon a general decision was known among us that we would not retreat further, and that we would fight in the next twenty-four hours. As far as the junction of Cos with Santa Anna is concerned my opinion, like that of many others, was then and always has been, that it was the best thing for Texas that could have taken place. Had we attacked them before, as we did on the evening of the 21st, they would have scattered pell-mell and Santa Anna would have taken an early opportunity to escape without making a stand at all. In our ex-

Digitized by Google

citement, we would have occupied ourselves in slaughtering the few Mexicans.

Some time between three and four o'clock on the afternoon of the 21st, when everything seemed to be in a quiet of suspense, I was moving about in front of a thicket on the top of the rise above our company, watching the Mexican camp which could be overlooked from there. Colonel Burleson came galloping up alone. He had come along the line on the left of the regiment, riding somewhat away from the right, on a straight course to the camp (a little in advance of us) of what was called the Battalion of Regulars (about a hundred men armed with muskets and bayonets). Burleson knew me familiarly. He said: "George, you run down and tell your captain and the captains on the right to come up here instantly and meet me"; then he galloped on. I delivered the order, there being only two other captains on our right, and was back immediately to the place myself. Within a few minutes the captains and some of the lieutenants of the regiment were assembled there. If anyone besides myself, not a commissioned officer, was there it was Craft, the orderly sergeant of Billingsley's company.

Burleson was back by the time they all got there, and dismounting he addressed his officers in about these words: "Gentlemen, I have called you together: fight we must—the time is the question. Shall we attack instantly, or in the morning? The officers of the other regiment are collected in council for the same purpose." After a pause Captain M. Baker spoke, saying it was late in the day, the fight might be protracted, and moved that we attack at daylight, giving some other reasons and ideas; but his speech was short. No objections were made; his proposition was at once agreed to, and Burleson remounted and rode off in the direction of the other regiment. The officers dispersed, except Billingsly, my captain, and three or four who had sat down on the ground; and I continued to stand by, listening to what they had to say.

In a few minutes Burleson came dashing back to the place, and said: "Captains, parade your companies. The other regiment has decided to fight immediately. I don't want mine to be a minute behind."

I have had occasion to tell this which I have here repeated many times before when talking of the battle of San Jacinto. I have

Digitized by Google

never heard it disputed. But this consultation of officers has never been brought up to me in conversation by any one else, nor have I found any allusion to such consultation in my reading of accounts of the battle. It indicated that the fight was brought about by the voice of the army. General Houston has always been accredited with having absolute control without council or advice. I do not know whether he demanded the consultation, or sanctioned it; but it shows that he, too, was undecided as to the course of action at the time. At the Veteran's meeting in San Antonio some years ago I asked Billingsly and Calder, the only captains of Burleson's regiment still living,[6] if they remembered the fact I have mentioned; they both replied that they remembered it well, but had hardly thought of it before. In publishing my views of San Jacinto in *Street's Monthly*[7] some seven years ago I made

[6]Captain Jesse Billingsly died October 1, 1880; Captain R. J. Calder died August 28, 1885.—THE EDITORS.

[7]*Street's Monthly* is unknown to the Editors. Perhaps, it was published at Waco. An undated and unidentified clipping accompanying the Erath *Memoirs* appears to be a reprint of Major Erath's account of the battle of San Jacinto. The editorial introduction in the clipping credits the account to *Street's News*. The account was written for a different purpose; and, after a few changes had been made, which appear on the clipping, it may presumably be regarded as bearing Major Erath's approval.—E. W. W.

The battle of San Jacinto is believed, by the present generation, to have effected its result by actual hard fighting, but the merits of the officers and soldiers of that time are in their perseverance, their hardships and privations.

After the fall of Bexar, in the month of December, 1835, the people became overconfident in their own ability and Mexican insignificance. A land speculating element of immigration, who did not remain, induced them to lean too much to private interest, and when the Alamo was besieged, no entreaties could bring men in the field, believing the handful of men under Travis sufficient to repulse 7,000 Mexicans, who advanced from the Rio Grande. When Travis and his men fell and were put to the sword by Santa Anna's proclamation for the extermination of the American people from the soil of Texas, terror took the place of self-confidence and boasting. At first a great number started to the army, but on General Houston's retreat to the Colorado, the greater portion of the men had to move their families, and as the retreat commenced to the Brazos, the army reduced from 1,400 to about 1,000 at Harrisburg, and only 683 at San Jacinto.

The integrity and self-sacrifice of those who remained really commands admiration, being subject to hardships not often paralleled. The men were mostly on foot, the country flooded with rain, many without shoes, wearing moccasins made of deer skins, stretching when wet, and when dry, contracting, to bring the foot into the dimensions of that of a Chinese lady; their clothing was scant, few had more than one thin blanket; their tents were open, and to avoid lying in the mud, brush or grass had to be obtained and laid down to sleep on.

Digitized by Google

these same statements, and I do so again because of their truth—not to produce any effect against Houston with whose conduct and management I have become very well reconciled, though at that time my opinions were with those of the army generally. Whether accident, Providence, or General Houston's military talent gave us victory that day I am willing to allow General Houston the credit, especially as his statesmanship later proved him a hero, and certain it is that had we attacked on the 20th and had wiped out the number there then, it would not have been to the same advantage.

Their supplies were beef principally, scant of salt, an ear of corn for a man a day, which had to be ground on a steel mill. Generally every company had one, which, after marching the whole day, was fastened to a tree for each mess to grind on, and then to be cooked into what is called mush, as there were no facilities for baking bread, frying pans and tin cups being the only cooking utensils. Many were sick, the discipline exacted by General Houston severe, often half at a time on guard, those not permitted to leave the guard fire for twenty-four hours; their mess mates had to prepare and bring to them their rations; all this was to do when the men had spent the greater part of the day knee-deep in water, standing half the time to await the slow movements of the cannon and wagons dragged by oxen out of the mud.

Such inconveniences made men reckless, there was a general clamor to fight, but we were really separated from the enemy by the attempt of Santa Anna to get ahead of us and reach the coast. Numbers left us in despair, giving up the cause as lost. Finally we reached Harrisburg, just burned and evacuated by the Mexicans, and the capture of a courier disclosed, partially, Santa Anna's intentions, but about two thousand Mexicans had left the Brazos, and they were scattered. Santa Anna only having with him about seven or eight hundred men, had gone to a place called New Washington, on the bay, to receive supplies by water.

Operations were determined on. Gen. Houston addressed us, and the baggage was to be left under guard, which consisted of the sick, the old men and the boys, and perhaps a few who thought the issue doubtful. The baggage could no longer be pulled by the worn-out teams, although all of it might now be [car]ried in one two-horse wagon [or o]n two mules.

We were to cook two days' rations, which was no light job, as we had little or no pots to cook it in. At night we crossed the bayou, marched down it in fours and holding together trying to sleep as we were walking along. At or near day we filed to the left, and were ordered to rest. Our provisions were eaten up during the night and we kept from going to sleep; and when daylight was on the sky a bunch of cattle came near. We killed some of them, built fires and had meat roasting on sticks, when Rusk galloped along the lines, saying, "Moments are ages; Santa Anna has burned New Washington, and is advancing on us on the bayou." Our meat was left, we fell into line and marched across the memorable bridge on Simms' bayou, and two miles below, in sight of Lynchburg, were again posted under the high ground in the small, narrow bottom of the Buffalo bayou. Officers dashed about and said the Mexicans were in sight, but we could not see them—the regiment I was in could not. More beef cattle coming near we killed some of them and had again our meat on sticks at the fire, half-roasted, when we were ordered into line to change

Digitized by Google

The announcement of the decision to fight acted like electricity. Being ever ready, our lines were formed at once, but in the low ground out of sight of the Mexicans. Perhaps, a delay of half an hour occurred till the position was perfect as to rank and number. We deployed on the high ground; first in line was the cavalry on the right, the artillery next, the small detachment of regulars next, the first regiment to which I belonged next, and the second regiment commanded by Colonel Sherman on the extreme left. Orders to wheel in detached companies and march in double file by heads of companies followed. Descending into a

positions, but this time we saved our meat by picking up the sticks. Falling in, answering to our names with the gun in one hand and a stick with meat in the other. We did not go far, only changed places. Our regiment (the first) was near the right, the second on our left and the artillery between us, the party of regulars on our right and the cavalry was dashing about in our front. The Mexicans were in sight and were at a loss to know who we were. Evidently they did not believe us to be the army of the Republic of Texas, though we were as many in number as they. They were soon informed of the fact, for as they advanced slowly to see us we fired our cannon at them, and they returned the compliment and wounded Col. Neill, commanding the artillery.

About the same time some of our cavalry near Lynchburg discovered two flatboats loaded with provisions, considerable of it being coffee and flour. They captured the boats after firing a few shots, and brought the welcome supplies to us.

I belonged to Company C, commanded by Capt. Billingsly (now living in Bastrop County), in the 1st Regiment of Volunteers, commanded by Col. Burleson.

Col. Burleson favored me, and in this campaign had me taken, some time before the battle, from the line for extra duty to guard supplies. I was near the company always, and in action in the line. On this occasion I acted with my company from Harrisburg, witnessing all I have described. About 3 o'clock on the 21st of April I was on an elevation, fifty yards in front of my company, looking at the Mexican maneuvers, when Col. Burleson [came ridi]ng the line and called [the capta]ins of the regiment to a [consultat]ion right where I stood. [Dismou]nting himself, he made, [in subs]tance, the following ad[dress]: "I have called you to[ge]ther for your opinions when to [fi]ght. Further retreat is impos[si]ble. The only question is, shall [w]e fight immediately or tomorrow. The other regiment is now holding a similar council.["] After some few remarks, Lieut. Moseley Baker proposed to take a position before day near the enemy and commence the battle at daylight, which was not objected to, and nearly unanimously agreed on. Col. Burleson galloped to the other regiment and immediately returned, saying loudly: "Captains, parade your companies! the other regiment has determined to fight right off. I don't want to be behind." But a few minutes elapsed, when we were in line, the roll was called, we were ordered to the right by companies, then right face march. The whole army was in line, the artillery and regulars were on our right, the second regiment on our left. We passed over a depression of ground for half a mile, where a rise in front of the Mexican line hid us from them. As we reached the top of the line in full view of the Mexicans, about 300 yards distant, General

Digitized by Google

sink of ground, then reaching a small eminence two or three hundred yards from the Mexicans, we were ordered to wheel by left into front, which was done, and brought us to the top of the hill.

Coming from the front, General Houston came dashing through our lines. The Mexican bullets were flying. The second regiment on our left had already joined combat. General Houston cried: "Not a man reinforcement! Not a man reinforcement!" and galloping on was wounded soon after.

I have said we knew of the reinforcement. I knew it; and the

Houston passed through our lines from front to rear, and was soon after wounded. We deployed into line, —ied arms, and advanced in [dou]ble quick. The Mexicans fired on us [as] soon as in sight, . . . [we] fired when within a hun[dre]d yards of their lines. On the first fire their lines faltered. We fired a second time only at those running. We were not checked in our advance except to load. I jumped over their breast-[works] where a man lay with his head half shot off by our cannon. Dead and wounded were strewn everywhere. I thought I had made the distance to the rear of the Mexican camp by what was called fighting and driving the Mexicans before me, quicker than I could have done it in an ordinary way.

The Mexicans crowded together some 300 yards in the rear of their camp on a slough in which a great number of Mexican cavalry horses were bogged down and struggling. They had to cross on them to keep from sticking fast, which fastened the horses so completely in the mud with only their backs and saddles out, that we could cross on them without difficulty. No further resistance was made. A gallant [Mexican officer att]empted to rally his men at a point of timber, but was shot down. The Mexicans begged for life, and those who did not throw [down] their arms were so terrified they did not know what to do. The pursuit continued a mile or more along the bank of the bayou, or bay, now 600 yards wide, and many jumped into the water, swam over, and were recaptured next day. Further to my right Colonel Almonte, with presence of mind, called on the Texas officers for magnanimity, and offered to make formal surrender of some 400 men; about 500 or 600 were taken that night, and many brought in the next and succeeding day, but few if any, escaped. Santa Anna was caught next day, and at once proposed peace, which, although it did not formally take place, led to a course forced on Mexico for five years without being able to make any other formidable invasion or offensive action on their part. San Jacinto decided the fate of Texas, and her independency. Independence was declared, and so acknowledged by foreign nations. Had the battle been fought the day before when we were equal in numbers, Santa Anna might have escaped by leaving in the rear and letting the body of his men surrender in front, which, under the expectation of severe resistance, would have occupied our time. Or he might have been taken in a different condition and killed. Had he lost his life either in battle or by execution, the Mexican nation would have become united, and, if not in revenge for the dictator alone, [would have] been [disposed] to invade and cause us much more annoyance, blood shedding and loss of treasure, than the cheap and easy manner in which we gained our independence. Saving his life made his own disgrace and discomfiture, and the division and incompetency of the Mexican nation had established our honor and character.

86773

Digitized by Google

whole of the company to which I belonged knew it well. By going up the hill to the thicket where the council mentioned took place, we could almost count the Mexicans. They could also be seen by climbing trees. At about eleven o'clock that morning a man stationed in a tree was telling those below what he saw, when a load of grape shot went through the tree-tops, and he slipped down in a hurry. I had heard a confidential conversation between General Rusk and Colonel Burleson in which Rusk said the idea must be put out that Santa Anna had gone, and that the men coming into the camp at daylight were the escort returning which had guarded him out. The disposition we were in at the time—to fight and end the suspense—was not affected by that cry of *not a man reinforcement!* The idea flashed to me at the moment that, under the fire of the Mexican artillery and in the excitement of the opening battle, it was an insult to us to think we could care for that little reinforcement. We would have fought the whole world then. We had been marched from the Guadalupe in a roundabout, zigzag way through swamps and bogs; we had lived part of the time on half-spoiled beef; we had been delayed in going through the lower country, often standing knee-deep in water waiting on baggage wagons to be drawn out of bogs; we had the experience of having even a woman draw a gun on us—some of us—for confiscating her oxen under orders; and we had been subjected to all the military discipline and practices that were ever enforced on troops of any country, standing guard twenty-four hours out of forty-eight, and not allowed to go to sleep even at the guard fire. General Houston made us a speech at Harrisburg as we started on our march to attack the Mexicans; he promised us that we should have full satisfaction for all we had gone through; and he closed his address by saying let your war cry be "Remember the Alamo!"

As the Mexicans shot high, nearly all the harm done to us was done during the descent of the hill to the Mexican line. We reserved our fire. It seemed to me that the order to fire was premature, as we were one hundred and fifty yards, I thought, from the Mexicans. While reloading my gun after my first fire I choked the ball. A young man named Ed Blakey was mortally wounded higher up the hill; he ran along by my side until he fell; I picked up his gun and shot bag, and threw mine down. The

Digitized by Google

whole Mexican line was in full flight by the time I got a second shot. Our men advanced rather in disorder, and drove the Mexicans across the boggy slew where many fell.

Their cannon had been taken and passed. Ours had ceased firing because we were too closely mixed with the Mexicans. At a point of timber across the slew, which was by this time bridged with bogged horses on which we crossed, a Mexican officer of high rank, flourishing his sword, made a grand appeal to rally his men, but was shot down, and the men who had turned to face us again resumed their flight only to be overtaken and shot. I do not like to dwell on these scenes. No doubt our men were justifiable, as the Mexican nation deserved punishment for its perfidy, though the soldiers were not responsible for it. About half of them were killed; some drowned in the bay.

General Almonte with commendable daring came forward among our men, called for officers, and demanded to be allowed to surrender. About five hundred men grouped up behind him on the principle of civilized warfare. I did not see this; I believe Colonel Burleson was the officer who accepted the surrender and gave the orders to cease firing. At the time I was with a large party of men all from different commands who were pursuing Mexicans toward the bay. Some attempted to swim across. I returned then.

Our troops were scattered and as much in disorder as the Mexicans. It took me some time to find the regiment, or the nucleous with the colonel in it, about the center of the Mexicans. The drums[8] were beating the assembly, and men were slowly coming in.

Of the main proceedings during the night I know little, being detached from the main body to guard Santa Anna's baggage. I wish to make one further comment on that time, which is, that I believe the Mexican soldiers we encountered that day were much braver than they have ever been credited with being; no one has ever disputed the bravery of their officers. There were two causes for officers and men alike being dispirited. One was the miserable position taken. It would have been a formidable one three hundred yards farther back, with the boggy slew in front, and the timber to rally in. The Mexican officers describe Santa Anna

[8]It has been claimed the army was without a drum.—L. A. E.

Digitized by Google

as not open to counsel, stubborn, self-confident, tyrannical, and the men knew that he had acted contrary to the laws of nations in the slaughter of our men at the Alamo and at Goliad. They had had good experience of the American in battle; we came with the cry of "Alamo!" and they knew it meant vengeance. We were not hurt in our advance by their fire, and we reserved our own for close quarters. Their resistence did not last over ten minutes.

When Burleson's regiment had slowly assembled and formed, with face toward our old camp, the right of it was by a pile of baggage closely covering a square of about thirty feet with open spaces inside. It was near the center of what had been the Mexican camp, and about fifty yards away down hill on the bank of the slew was another such square of baggage. The officers had waited till after sundown for men to come in and now Burleson ordered them to take up the march back to camp. I and an elderly man, Simmons, from Bastrop, were at the time standing by this pile of baggage. Burleson came up to me and said, "You two stay right here tonight. Take charge particularly of this pile of baggage, but look after both. You may take anything to eat and allow others to have eatables; but don't let anything valuable be carried off by anybody." I made some remark as to how long we were to stay, and he said the whole night if necessary, that we could sleep time about, and that he would try and have us relieved. He rode away; we went inside the baggage pile and found it was Santa Anna's, containing camp furniture of silver, nicely arranged, such as a European prince might take with him into the field. And there were besides all kinds of eatables—a considerable part already cooked. Simmons took a kind of mat off a pyramid about six feet high, and called me to look. It was several dozen baskets of champagne; and just beside it was found another such a pyramid. I was not interested in champagne, nor did Simmons make any immoderate use of it; but he gave the bottles liberally to the stragglers returning to camp, saying that it belonged to the eatables which we had permission to give away.

There was a disagreeable scene near; a pile of dead Mexicans, and some wounded ones lay close up against the baggage and among it. Their cries of *A Dios!* and *Agua!* aroused my sympathy and I furnished them with water; but they all died before midnight.

Digitized by Google

When Captain Roman of Company A of our regiment arrived with his men in about two hours, we thought he had come to relieve us, but he said he had been sent especially to take charge of the military chest the colonel had left in our possession. I told him it was not here but might be in the other pile of baggage which we had not examined; so he marched his company to the other baggage, found the chest, and came back to tell us, when we showed him the champagne. Then he called for his lieutenant, and the matter of champagne got out some way so that we had plenty of company of officers for the rest of the night. I don't think much of the wine was left. I took my carouse in eating sugar while others drank. Neither Simmons nor I got a wink of sleep the whole night. An officer brought an order in the morning for Captain Turner to take charge, and Burleson sent a message to me that it had been his intention to have Roman relieve us in the night.

The military chest contained eleven thousand dollars in specie. Santa Anna's fine saddle, which was in my possession that night, brought eight hundred dollars when sold at auction the next day. All the finery and silver with the military chest brought sixteen hundred dollars. After three thousand was voted to the navy, there was left for every man in the service, whether in the battle or not, eleven dollars apiece. I do not believe the rumors of embezzlement. It is my opinion that everything was handled fairly and squarely.

About half the Mexican force was killed, some wounded, and seven hundred prisoners taken. About eight hundred pack mules and a number of horses fell into our hands. Our own loss, if I remember aright, was six killed and eighteen wounded; only one killed and six wounded in our company; there were twenty-four companies in all.

As might have been expected Santa Anna made his escape while his officers and men were fighting for him. He was captured next day in a thicket up a tree about two miles from our camp.[9] Statements vary as to the details of his capture. I saw him soon after he was brought in. On account of my occupation the night before, I was given liberty the next day. I slept during the forenoon.

[9]For variants of the account of the capture of Santa Anna see THE QUARTERLY, V, 92-95.—THE EDITORS.

Digitized by Google

In the afternoon I heard a rumor of Santa Anna's capture, and went down to General Houston's camp near the bank of the bayou. Quite in contrast with Santa Anna's extravagant luxuries, Houston lay wounded on a blanket or two, with his head against a tree, and a rope was stretched around him breast high to keep him from being stepped on by passers-by. Santa Anna was already inside the rope, but few were aware that he was there. Lieutenant Bryan and Vice-President Zavala were interpreting. Almonte, who spoke English well, was also brought. Other officers came and received introductions to Santa Anna, but few remained by. I followed very closely his phrasing in his own language, and thought him a great diplomatist. Among his first propositions was an armistice, and when he understood it was not desired, unless for the purpose of negotiation for our independence, the substance of his reply, as I remember it, was that the fate of war had decided the matter, and he intimated that he would not be averse to granting it. I also remember that he laid stress on the fact that he still had four thousand men under arms on the Brazos, but offered for the sake of compromise to order them to retire. This is giving the particulars of my own remembrance, which does not differ in the main from other accounts.

6. Aftermath of San Jacinto

We were forced to occupy the position nearly a week to dispose of property. As the Mexicans were not buried, the place became disagreeable; we moved three miles higher up. Generals Houston and Santa Anna were taken down to Lynchburg on a steamboat. General Woll came in about the last of April under a flag of truce to attend to the ratification of the terms settled on by the negotiations with Santa Anna.

Immediately after the battle men continued to arrive from the United States and from Eastern Texas. A company of volunteers from Eastern Texas marched into camp two or three days after the battle with banners flying and music. Men were also leaving. During the first week in May we marched to the Brazos, recrossing it at Fort Bend. The Mexican army had retired to the Colorado. I was away from the company several days, going up the Bayou in a steamboat to Allen's Landing, a single warehouse where the city of Houston is now situated, and I rejoined the company there.

Digitized by Google

Most of our wagons had been left behind and pack mules substituted. A complaint was made that more than half the mules taken from the Mexicans had been stolen. After crossing the Brazos we camped close by.

A flag of true sent by our commander and government to the Mexican camp returned, bringing the ratification of the so-called treaty by which the Mexicans were to retire beyond the Nueces, which meant beyond the Rio Grande, as there was no settlement or situation on the Nueces in which to take up a position.

The time of service of the greater part of our army, an enrollment of three months from the first of March, was now expiring, and on the 14th of May Captain Billingsly was ordered to go to Bastrop with his company to disband. We started on the 15th with a wagon and some pack mules, and the next day passed through San Felipe, which had been burned, and crossing Mill Creek, marched to some point on its waters in the direction of Bastrop, and camped at a house to which part of the family had returned. All other homes we passed were unoccupied; in their flight the people had left behind them hogs, cattle, and other property, but had taken with them their horses. At this particular place where we camped some horses had been left and were still there, and with them were two strays, which very much to our surprise and pleasure turned out to be the two horses on which George Green and I had started forth to join the army. George Green was a young man of my age; he and I started in company to the war; and he has since been my lifelong friend. He had kept his horse, as I did mine, after joining Captain Billingsly's company, which was considered infantry. At night we hobbled them and turned them loose to graze like the other horses of the company; but when we got to the Brazos bottom and encamped there the animals had to be taken to the highlands, four or five miles off, to graze under guard. Ours strayed off. We had walked most of the campaign. Green fared worse than I, for the quartermaster's department frequently furnished me a horse. Green had sold his saddle; mine was still with me in the baggage wagon.

After getting back our horses, Captain Billingsly willingly gave us a furlough for the remaining time of our enlistment, two weeks, until we should disband at Bastrop. Saying good-by to all

Digitized by Google

the members of the company, and exchanging many expressions of friendship and esteem, we set out at once. We rode through a section of country which is now in Washington County, passing the scattering houses by the way; all were deserted by their owners, but unmolested by Mexicans, with supplies and meat still hanging in the smokehouses. We reached Porter's the next day, Thursday, the 19th of May, in the lower part of Robertson's colony, which had in the meantime been changed by the Convention to Milam County. It will be called so by me after this, and I may here state that about eighteen months later the congress of the Republic formed two counties out of it, making and calling all of that portion east of the Brazos River Robertson County, and retaining the name of Milam for the portion west of the Brazos embracing all the tributaries of that stream north and northwest of the San Antonio Road to the head of the Brazos. A little later about seven or eight hundred square miles below the San Antonio Road to the Yegua were added. All of this territory now comprises about twenty-five counties, covering about twenty-five thousand square miles, and is still known as Milam Land District.

Much to our joy we found Porter and his family and some of the neighbors had returned. They had fled as far as the Trinity, but came back immediately after San Jacinto. Property was undamaged, as the Mexicans had not devastated east of the Colorado that high up the country. My cattle were all there except one horse that was carried off by a Mexican who had lived with an American family in pretended loyalty to Texas, but had disappeared at the same time my horse did, before the departure of Porter and others during the Runaway time. This was all the loss I sustained, and Porter and my friends had hunted that horse for me before they left.

Everybody got busy working out crops, and I helped Porter. But the people on the frontier had cause to be apprehensive of Indian attacks. A few families higher up the country who had not run away before, now after the Mexican scare was all over, moved down to the settlements for protection. About the first of June came the news of the capture of Parker's Fort by the Indians; it created general consternation. For the protection of

Digitized by Google

the frontier companies were at once formed, and I again entered the service just as my time of enlistment was expired.

The temporary government of Texas was for a short time at Galveston Island, where Santa Anna and the Mexican prisoners were also taken for safe keeping. This produced the laying off of Galveston. The government, however, was soon moved to Velasco, and Santa Anna and his aid-de-camp taken there; the other prisoners were left at Galveston, but all were released the next year. The government was again moved to Columbia, thirty miles above the mouth of the Brazos and six miles west of Bell's Landing at the wagoners' camping ground of old times. The next summer it was moved to Houston and remained there till its final move to Austin in 1839.

The greater part of the men who composed the army of San Jacinto were discharged by or during the month of June, 1836, and those living up the country joined the frontier service, while some of those below entered the new army organized in the fall and composed to a [large] extent of volunteers just arrived from the United States.

There was a general election that fall; and Houston was elected president; the constitution formed by the convention in March was adopted; a congress elected which convened in October at Columbia; and by the end of the year the government may be said to have been fairly inaugurated and organized. The Mexicans made themselves powerless by their own revolutions and general differences as to what course to pursue toward Texas. Our army, in a manner idle volunteers from the United States, would have been anxious for offensive operations; but now Houston's statesmanship began to show, and he acted on the defensive and awaited events.

Santa Anna, owing his release to Houston, was sent to Washington, and interviewed by President Jackson, and undoubtedly gave pledges to both not to interfere, at least, at present against Texas. But Santa Anna himself gained no power after his return to Mexico, then in a state of revolution for several years. His gallant leadership of the army in 1839 forced the French out of Vera Cruz and again gave him the ascendency. He did not establish peace and gain the whole country until 1841, and by that time we had been recognized as an independent nation by

Digitized by Google

the principal powers of Europe and by the United States. England and France had begun to make propositions and to interfere in our behalf for our independence to be acknowledged by Mexico.

During these next five years up to 1841 the country on the frontier progressed but little in settlement, and not at all from the San Antonio River toward the Rio Grande. Even Goliad was not occupied. A few hostilities with Mexico, carried on chiefly by guerrilla parties, resulted usually in victories to our side. The country had no means for carrying on war or paying soldiers. We depended at first on donations and subscriptions from friends in the States. The population was so small and resources so limited that taxation was impossible. Tariff regulations could not go into force for some time. There was no revenue for the first two years, and any one serving in civil or military capacity was expected to do so on credit. Soldiers were promised a certain amount of pay, and those enlisting before the first of October, 1837, received a claim of 320 acres of land for every three months' service—to be located at their own expense.

In the fall of 1836 a battalion of rangers for the defense of the frontier was raised of which I became a member. We were promised twenty-five dollars a month and 1280 acres of land for every twelve months' service; the government furnished ammunition and rations, but we furnished our own horses and arms; we lived for the most part on game out of the woods. I have known more than one man enlisting to give his whole claim for land and money in advance for a horse, saddle and bridle, with which to serve for it. Ammunition was the only thing furnished us, and some beef now and then.

General Houston in due time saw what mischief the idle army stationed about the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers might produce; in the spring of 1837 he began to furlough it off; then he called congress in the summer, and had the army discharged early in the fall. Congress at that time passed bills over his veto to issue paper money. The country became flooded with it in paying off the soldiery the next year. It depreciated in the year 1838 to two for one, in '39 to three for one, the next year to four for one, and in 1841 to eight for one. It was set aside the

Digitized by Google

next year, in Houston's second administration, but was finally paid after annexation.

By the constitution the first president was to serve only two years, and his successors three years without being eligible to succeed themselves. General Houston went out before Texas money depreciated. His successor proclaimed a war of extermination against the Indians; an attempt at the impossibility as already proven by the United States, and inaugurated expeditions against Mexico in which money was spent without law and to the financial detriment of the country.

7. Little River Fort Established and the Elm Creek Fight, 1836-1837

Enlisting again after San Jacinto I was attached to Robertson's company against the Indians, and in July transferred to Captain Hill's company which operated between the Brazos and Colorado, participating in an engagement on the Yegua in August. On the first of October I enlisted in a corps of rangers then commanded by Colonel Coleman, and served as lieutenant under Captain Barron who was stationed at the Falls of the Brazos (Viesca).

In the early part of November, 1836, I, with two sergeants, Lee R. Davis and McLochlan, was placed in command of a few over twenty men taken out of Captain Barron's company, and sent to establish the fort on Little River, about a mile from what is known as Three Forks near the banks of the Leon. Colonel Coleman with a few men went with us to the point designated, and after we had traveled, marked, cut out, and measured a road from the Falls to the spot, he left me, continuing on measuring a road to his fort on Walnut Creek about six miles east of where Austin now stands, and six or eight miles above Hornsby's, then the highest settlement on the Colorado.

An attempt to settle the surrounding country had been made the winter before, and here and there unfenced patches of corn, planted in the spring, had reached maturity in the unusually favorable season, and had not been eaten up by buffalo or other wild stock. By going or sending out I could procure a few bags of nubbins, and I issued my men an ear of corn apiece a day for bread, which they ground on a steel mill. Our meat was wild game which was plentiful. Honey had to be kept in rawhide or

Digitized by Google

deerskin sacks with the hair outside, and at Christmas we had several hundred pounds of it about the Fort. A very little coffee was brought up with us, and used with great economy. Coleman left me three or four axes and some other tools, a wagon and two yoke of steers, and the steel mill already mentioned. Pots and other cooking utensils and useful household things were found around the evacuated country in or near deserted cabins where the settlers had hidden them in thickets or other favorable spots before running away.

My memory for details on almost all subjects is good, but I am at a loss how to account for the amount of work done that winter by men who had to guard, hunt, cook, dress deerskin, and make clothes of it, particularly moccasins, and in all ways provide everything, and yet in six weeks time, by Christmas, I had up seven or eight houses with wooden chimneys, well covered, and with buffalo hide carpets down. I can say, however, that I had the honor to command a set of men unexcelled in capacity and industry, all of whom became good citizens of Texas. I know of but one now alive, Lewis Moore, living about six miles above Waco. Robert Childers, living in Bell County, is another who was with us, but not enlisted. One of the soldiers, Cullens, had his family with him, and occupied a cabin to himself, as did also Mr. Goldsby Childers[10] who with his family and another grown son besides the one I have already mentioned was with us.

Congress having reorganized the ranger force, new officers were added; most of the old ones were retained; some of the inferiors promoted. Colonel Coleman was deposed by General Houston, and Major Smith appointed to take his place; and in consequence about Christmas time Lieutenant Curtis arrived at our fort with orders to take command, and for me to hold myself in readiness to proceed at any moment, under additional special orders still to be sent, to Colorado (Coleman's) Fort with notification to Colonel Coleman. The special orders for me came on the 4th of January, but with them McLochlan arrived, bringing the news that about twelve miles away on the waters of Elm Creek he had seen the tracks of some dozen Indians on foot going down the country. All was bustle and confusion during the night, as we

[10]**The correct spelling of the names of Goldsby Childers and his sons has been verified by their kinsman, the Hon. Geo. W. Tyler, of Belton.**

Digitized by Google

determined that these Indians should not be allowed to go down the country to do mischief.

Besides mine and Lieutenant Curtis's there were but ten horses belonging to the service. Lieutenant Curtis was properly in command, but he did not intend to go, nor let his horse go, but wanted me to go and take eight or ten men on foot. I was eager to go but opposed to taking men on foot. No decision was made during the night and in the morning it was raining, and continued to rain till the middle of the afternoon. By this time or at least with the closing of day it was decided what we would do, and next morning we started after the horses were got out of the woods, perhaps by nine o'clock. I had ten men from the service with their horses, a man by the name of Lishely who was looking at the country, who had been but a short time in Texas, and the two Childers boys. There were four young men from the settlements who started out with me. They had lived in the country before the Runaway, and were back to look after property and just starting home; so they promised to accompany me as far as I went toward the settlements. These young men left me when we had gone five or six miles, as I was bearing away from the course they wanted to go, which was toward their home at Nashville, sixty miles below. I was left with thirteen men, the three volunteers (Lishely and the Childers brothers) and my ten from the service whose names I give:[11] Sergeant McLochlan, Lee R. Davis, David Clark, an elderly man, Empson Thompson, Jacob Gross, Jack Hopson, John Fokes, Lewis Moore, Morris Moore, Green McCoy, the three last named were mere boys, two of them not fifteen years old, but expert with the rifle, good woodsmen, good hunters, and they had good rifles. Lee Davis had two good pistols, Lishely had one. They were all expert with the rifle. Jack Hopson was armed with a musket, and John Fokes, also a mere boy, not much used to woods life, carried a shotgun. I had a very good rifle and fine pistol, and with McLochlan was the best mounted. Only four of us had ever been in encounters before.

We went on a few hours longer before we struck the Indian trail. And behold! instead of a dozen the signs showed nearer

[11]For a variant of this account of the Elm Creek fight see Brown's *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*, 46, 47.

Digitized by Google

a hundred, all on foot and going down the country toward the nearest settlements. We followed, and came to where they had camped the whole day before during the rain. Their fires were still there; they had erected eight or ten shelters out of sticks and grass; each could shelter eight or ten men. The trail made a plain road; it was no trouble to follow. An Indian, or an old hunter, could have told by the cut of the moccasin soles to what tribe they belonged; but we did not have the art, and were perplexed on the subject. It was agreed that if they were wild Indians we could manage them; but if Caddos, or the like, we might find our hands full.

At nightfall, about twenty-three miles from the fort and about eight from where Cameron now stands, we lost the trail, but soon heard the Indians call to each other in the bottom not half a mile away. I fell back a half mile, and sent McLochlan and Robert Childers on again to reconnoitre. They returned before midnight, reporting that they could not find the camp. About four o'clock in the morning we saddled our horses and tied them to trees, and went on foot to where we had lost the trail, and at dawn found it again, going down into a ravine. We followed the ravine which ran parallel with a creek several hundred yards to another ravine at right angles, and here the Indians had turned square down to the creek. Following toward the creek, we heard the Indians coughing, and going up a bank across a bend came in full view of them less than a hundred yards away, all dressed, a number of them with hats on, and busy breaking brush and gathering wood to make fires. We dodged back to the low ground, but advanced toward them, it not yet being broad daylight. Our sight of them revealed the fact that we had to deal with the formidable kind, about a hundred strong. There was not time to retire or consult. Everybody had been quite willing to acquiesce in my actions and orders up to this time. To apprehensions expressed I had answered that we were employed by the government to protect the citizens, and let the result of our attempt be what it might, the Indians would at least be interfered with and delayed from going farther down the country toward the settlements.

They were camped in a small horseshoe bend. We took position at a point under the bank of the creek. It was not light enough for all to see the sights of their guns. Our distance from

Digitized by Google

them we thought at the time to be fifty yards, but it proved to be not more than twenty-five. While waiting there for it to grow lighter, altogether undiscovered by the Indians, a large spotted dog came from them to us, without creating any disturbance whatever, and went quietly back again.

When we fired some of them fell about the fires, but most of them stooped to grab their guns, and then took posts behind trees, raised a yell, returned the fire, and flanked out from both sides to get into the creek where they could see our strength. Half of us had jumped upon the bank. Had we all had pistols, or the six-shooters of the present day, we could have charged them and kept them running. But as it was, we had to keep our positions to reload our guns. They opened a heavy fire with their rifles. Their powder out-cracked ours; if a shotgun was heard, it was but once or twice out of five or six hundred shots. No bows and arrows were seen.

After a few minutes Clark and Frank Childers on my right flank were mortally wounded from the fire up the creek. Telling the wounded ones to go back as far as they could, I ordered my men to fall back in two squads, to the other side of the creek, to gain the top of the bank, and to post themselves behind trees, which they did, while I stood in my old position under the bank, loading my gun, and watching the Indians approach. As the men got posted, the Indians commenced charging with a terrific yell. I retreated to the other side of the channel of the creek, but found myself under a steep bank five or six feet high. The Indians came on, and jumped down the bank on their side where I had been. One had his gun within a few feet of me, fired, but missed me. I couldn't miss him, and he fell right before me. This shot and the fire of my men from their new position caused them to dart back again a few feet behind trees. I made an effort to get up the bank with my back to it and my face to the enemy; holding by a root with one hand, I swung partially up, but fell back. My men called to know if I was hurt; I said "No, help me up the bank!" Lewis Moore and Thompson lay down on the ground, reached their hands down and pulled me up with my gun.

Rallying them now, I had Davis fall back fifty or sixty feet with one squad and take a new position; I with the rest covered his movement. Then we fell back about the same distance be-

Digitized by Google

yond them; they covered our retreat; and so we continued, standing and retreating alternately, till we got several hundred yards to an open bottom. The trees were elm, about six inches in diameter, and the balls of the Indians kept striking them. My left reached the bank of the gully into which we had first descended. There was a big thicket on the opposite side. The Indians now charged us with great fury and yells, and we could not be blamed for seeking shelter. Seeing Indians dashing toward us on the right, McLochlan and I took to a big tree, and McLochlan presented his gun to shoot, but could not. I had mine loaded, took good aim at a bunch of Indians close by, but had no time to note the effect of my shot. McLochlan and I ran to another thicket, while the Indians, who still kept up their terrific yelling, got between us and the other men. Fifteen or twenty steps more and we reached the ravine that went square up from the creek, and here we found the wounded Clark who said something to us about fighting to the last or we would all be killed. McLochlan said he had nothing to fight with, as his gun was broken. Clark told him to take his, but he did not, but went on up the gulley and found the other men. I stayed a little longer with Clark, who was then sinking, but went on when I saw a half dozen Indians coming. I reached a different prong of the gully. After going two or three hundred yards more I got to open ground, reloaded my gun, and, seeing some of my men on ahead among the elm trees, called to them, and they waited for me.

The Indians no longer advanced; they went back. Some of them found Clark around whom they yelled and whom they butchered up. But they did not find Frank Childers, who had sat down by a tree, leaned his gun upright against it, and died there within twenty-five steps of the thickest of the fighting. I collected my men, found one missing, who we rightly supposed got out of the way uninjured. We heard the Indians turn their noise from a yell to a howl. I thought then that they would not stay long in the place, and that we might remain around and later in the day go back to look after our dead men, but I cannot blame my men for rejecting my proposition to do so. Several of them then informed me that they would never have gone into the affair except for the possibility of being impeached for cowardice or disobedience to authority.

Digitized by Google

There were several narrow escapes during the fight; a ball broke McLochlan's ramrod, another his gun lock, and still another went through his powder horn and let the powder out. One went through a handkerchief on his head and cut his hair, and another went through his coat.

We arrived at the Fort that night, Saturday, the 7th of January, 1837. I started the next morning with four men for Colorado Fort to carry out the orders I had received, and have never been back to the battle ground since.

Next day Lieutenant Curtis sent McLochlan there with about fifteen men to bury the dead. He arrived after nightfall and from various signs concluded the Indians were still there. He sent one of his men on to the Falls of the Brazos by a roundabout way to inform Major Smith; and himself returned with the rest to Little River Fort. The messenger sent disseminated the news along the way, and it got down to Nashville and to the few settlements below clear to Washington County, creating considerable fear of Indians. On the night of the 9th of January, just after I arrived at the Colorado Fort with the news, and about the time McLochlan got back to Little River Fort with the supposition that the Indians were still around, a big snow storm came up and sleet and ice delayed all movements.

I got back to Little River Fort on the 16th, and learned from Curtis that a dozen men from the Fort had now gone down to meet some more from the Falls and that, with what volunteers they could muster from the settlements, a big battle was to be given the Indians. That same evening of the 16th of January, the men who had gone from it, and Major Smith with his men from the Falls, arrived at Little River Fort. They had found Childers untouched where he had died at the battle on Elm Creek. The Indians apparently remained only long enough to gather up their dead, which according to their own statement later was ten.

At the time we attacked them they were within eight miles of Walker's house, where Neil McLennan's family and his son-in-law's family were living. McLennan himself, with his son and two negroes, was at work on Pond Creek twelve miles higher up. Women and children left alone might have suffered the next day had we not then turned the Indians from going farther down the country.

Digitized by Google

8. Surveying and Indian Fighting Resumed, 1838-1842

It was perhaps true in a measure that armed parties out on surveying expeditions answered as rangers for protection of the frontier, but as soon as the territory adjacent to settlements was surveyed the attacks on and killing of such parties by Indians modified the surveying business. As I took part in the surveying business of the time, remained in it, and went far out beyond the settlements to carry it on in the intervals between military service, it may be well for me to explain something about the nature of it.

Not pausing to consider the land law as to grants and issuing of certificates, I will speak only of the law in relation to surveying. A county surveyor was elected by congress for every county, but he was not really to practice in the field. He was the recorder of field notes, keeper of maps, reporter of what was done, but, under the first principles of the land law, was not expected to survey, except in the smaller interior counties where there was little business. Deputies did the field work; they were appointed by him, but were independent of him; they were distinct officers, giving bond and security to the president and after annexation to the governor. A county surveyor, when he did actual business in the field in the smaller counties, had to give additional bond as deputy for surveying. Application for surveys could be made directly to the deputy, and if the applicant distinctly pointed out the land himself, or through his agent, it had preference over the application made to the county surveyor. I am citing for the most part transactions in Milam County, Central Texas.

The constitution of the Republic did not require that a man should be a citizen of Texas for any specified time before election to office, provided he was a citizen when he went into office. Congress met on the first Monday in December; the elections were held on the first Monday in September. As a man was a citizen after six months' residence, he could come into the country the last day of May, be elected in September, and hold office in December.

Milam County at the outset embraced an immense territory;

Digitized by Google

the southern portion was most accessible. Applications for the position of deputy surveyor were made by men who had never been in the county, and they were favored by our representatives, who in a manner had the control.[12] Because I was a soldier and could act as guard without any extra compensation, these same congressmen and some of the people thought it the proper thing for me to be appointed deputy surveyor to the most exposed district on the frontier. I was averse to hiring hands and paying out of my own pocket a high price to get fighting characters to maneuver against and chase Indians. Because I was considered of some service as a soldier, and was an older citizen, I thought I should have had the preference over new men. So I concluded to have no district at all to survey, and went to San Antonio, where I ran a compass for a surveyor two or three months. A little indignation then shown in my behalf ended with the resignation of the county surveyor who had made the appointments. His successor, James Howlet, was a man just arrived from Virginia but being a very good scholar he was well fitted to keep the office—not going into the woods at all—and he did keep the office for twelve years. He promised the people to appoint me at once, but I delayed returning until the first of August, 1838. By that time five or six surveyors had surveyed up all the country near the settlements less subject to danger, excepting irregular fractions, or poor land not in demand.

A larger number of chain carriers and other help was required for operating in the frontier districts. Unless such persons had lands of their own to locate, or were interested in locating land for others on shares, or received extra pay in money, it was almost impossible to secure such assistants. The surveyor himself was precluded by heavy penalties from taking any interest in lands he surveyed or receiving extra pay. It was also customary to allow hands pay from the time they started till they returned, the surveyor paying for all the traveling and time wasted watching Indians. Thus it can easily be seen that the business was not very profitable. Payment was tendered in Texas money and often not paid for a year or two; so a fee made in 1838 when

[12]Thomas A. Graves was elected first surveyor of Milam County, December 15, 1837.

Digitized by Google

Texas money rated two for one and paid in 1840 when it rated four for one was a still greater loss. And up to that time it was considered all right by people of the frontier for a man to do work and wait two years or more for his pay. I may add, too, that such a thing as interest was unheard of in those days.

Although I was out several times with small parties I had little trouble from Indians in 1838. Stilman S. Curtis was killed that year. He was with me locating lands, got sick, and undertook to go alone to the settlement at Nashville forty miles away. Indians killed him near the crossing on Little River; his body was never found; but the Indians, only four in number, passed where we were at work, leading Curtis's horse. Our party consisted of ten men, but only five of us were at the place when we saw the Indians. Three of my men mounted and gave chase, but did not overtake the Indians.

The year 1839 was marked particularly by Indian depredations. The Morgan fight came off in January, and the resettlement of that place was attempted without success. I was out continually, but more often on scouts than surveying. In the latter part of February President Lamar issued an order for every county to raise a company of troops. I was elected captain of the Milam County company at its organization on the eighth of March. I was in no fight of importance; the operations of the next three months have already been mentioned by me in talking of Indian affairs and in my account of the Bird Creek fight from what I had heard of it.[13]

After the expiration of the three months for which the company was enlisted, I made four surveying expeditions through the rest of the year; none of them exceeded twenty days' absence or six days actual surveying at a time. In one of them, in October, I succeeded in capturing a prize of twenty-seven horses from the Indians. We were fourteen men, and about one hundred and fifty miles out from the settlements.

The settlement of the county was retarded so that in the fall of 1839 only about twenty-five families, in four settlements, including the town of Nashville, remained in the southeast corner

[13]The pages dealing with Indian affairs and the Bird Creek fight are missing from the manuscript.—L. A. E.

Digitized by Google

of the county. Counting a number of young men, there were only fifty voters at the fall election in the whole county.

No one would hire to go surveying. The persons who accompanied me were generally young men with lands to locate either for themselves or for others on shares or on extra pay. The holders of the land certificates very often lived a long way off and were not disposed to venture into danger. I did not locate for others, and only received the surveying fees, at three dollars per mile in Texas money, then depreciated to three for one. It had now become a practice all over the frontier region not to run clear around the surveys, but to make two or three corners, as most convenient, and give the distance to the watercourses. Every man having lands to locate was glad to get even that much done to have his claims located. Locaters out in the woods were most anxious, not from a disposition against too much work, but from the danger encountered while at it.

In 1840 some changes in this respect took place. Some of those who had been with me were weary of the business, although the Indians for a time gave less trouble—almost none the first five months of the year. The two expeditions I made up to the first of May were more profitable than any before, notwithstanding I had employed for extra guard about double the hands needed. The contracts I had made were with New Orleans landowners, who were willing to pay good money for surveying. Texas money was taken at its value in New Orleans, where all goods imported to Texas were bought. I saw nothing of Indians during these two expeditions, although a hundred miles out from the settlements. But in June, with only ten men, I found myself forced to return on account of Indians. Hostilities again became general and I rejoined the service.

In January and February, 1841, I was with the Morehouse expedition which went up the Brazos above Comanche Peak, from there to the Trinity, and then back to the Brazos. There were about one hundred and twenty-five whites in the party, a hundred Tonks and fifteen Lipans. I had charge of the Indians and about twenty white men for spies. During the expedition the Indians killed two hostiles—all that were seen on the whole trip; no one on our side was hurt. The expedition was the mis-

Digitized by Google

take of military characters, newly arrived in Texas. They were of the opinion that Indians could be exterminated by carrying the war into their own country in the winter season, by finding their winter villages, destroying their provisions, and starving them out. Experience had already taught the Texas rangers that the Indians were quartered in their villages in the summer time only, eating what little agricultural produce they made, and that in cold weather they scattered to hunt and feast on bear and other wild animals.

Congress passed a law providing for the organization in every frontier county of a company of minutemen; five men were to serve as scouts, the balance to remain at home and serve when called out on occasion of Indian invasion, getting pay accordingly. On the eighth of March, 1841, I was again elected captain of the Milam County men, and was for the greater part of the year in active service.

In the summer the Milam and Robertson County companies, and part of the Travis County company made an expedition up the Brazos. The celebrated chief José Maria was wounded and one Indian was killed in an encounter with one of our parties; our side lost one man. No supplies except what could be carried on our horses had been taken along, and we were too many to live on game alone, so we soon returned. Other scouts during the year were without much success, but the Indians were now giving less trouble, and had made known a desire for peace. The declaration of President Lamar to carry on a war of extermination against them they knew well; also that General Houston, who was now again a candidate and elected, had commenced to treat with them before his first term was out.

Financial pressure set in. Texas money depreciated to six and eight for one; the government had to pay it out at this rate for supplies. With few exceptions the soldiers were not paid at all, as there was nothing else to pay them with for the next ten years. As we had nothing but Texas money to exchange for goods and necessaries, and since everything we bought came from New Orleans, the money all went there, too. It became expedient to start a self-supporting system at home. The women turned to spinning and weaving, the men to tanning leather and to making

Digitized by Google

whatever could be made in the country. The only articles we could not do without were iron, salt, medicine, and ammunition. Coffee was only eight cents a pound at Houston and on the coast, but we could substitute corn, okra, and rye for it. Sugar was beyond us except near the coast.

Trade with Santa Fé in certain articles of merchandise was said to be immensely profitable, and several wagon loads of such goods were taken along by the Santa Fé expedition. That expedition was commanded by Colonel William G. Cooke and was composed of about four hundred men. It was accompanied by commissioners to treat with the people of Santa Fé who, it was said, were willing to come under our government. Many of the party, newcomers from the States and old Texans, too, were in search of romance and adventure. The expedition was never authorized by Congress, and money not appropriated for it was paid out with much effect on our finances. Starting from Austin, it proceeded northeast, crossed Little River at the Three Forks, came within five miles of the Brazos near Waco, crossed the Bosque at what is now known as the Santa Fé Crossing, pushed on parallel with the Brazos to the mouth of the Paluxy, and then passed east of the Comanche Peak, making toward the waters of the Trinity. I struck the trail of it repeatedly in my scouting for Indians. It traversed an entirely unsettled country, and I last saw the track somewhere near the present site of Weatherford, going northward.

The guides were old hunters and trappers; some of them had been engaged in the Santa Fé trade, and knew well the country north of Red River to Santa Fé. I myself had considerable acquaintance with such men before that time in the frontier service. I had often heard them speak of the trail from Natchitoches to Santa Fé. This trail lay on the north side of Red River, close to the stream for water, and clear out by its head. It was the oldest trading route from New Orleans to Santa Fé, having been established when Louisiana as well as Mexico belonged to Spain. It was abandoned after St. Louis became a city, and trade opened from there with Santa Fé. This was the trail that the pilots of the Santa Fé expedition expected to strike.

From the hunters I knew I never heard but one prong of Red

Digitized by Google

River mentioned—the one next to the trail, now called the northern prong. It was said that the commissioners, who negotiated and adopted the boundary between the United States and Spain in the year 1819, traveled on that trail to the 100th degree of longitude, and adopted the Red River next to it—the only river of the name then known—as the boundary. The Prairie Dog Fork of Red River was known to the Comanches as Prairie Dog River. It was spoken of by the hunters as a boggy slough or sink a mile wide, all quicksand at the bottom, where water would rise at night and in cloudy times, and difficult to cross. To strike that trail from the point where I last saw the track of it, the Santa Fé expedition would have had to cross the Prairie Dog River and pass through the disputed territory now known as Greer County. I maintain that by such passage through it we obtained the first military possession of the country. No force of the United States had ever entered it or claimed it. There was but one Red River known—the northern fork. The same territory was traversed two years later by our Snively expedition.

Many changes in political affairs took place in 1842. With the exception of a few men left under Hays to watch Mexican movements, the soldiers had been discharged, and being without pay they were needy and eager to go to work, but could find little employment. The people, much discouraged, had no particular faith in the coming Indian treaties. But the frontier had advanced to some degree on the Brazos and east. In the west it remained about the same. President Houston's attempt to move the seat of government from Austin added to the discouragement. A new financial theory was adopted. The old Texas money, now depreciated to eight or ten for one, was entirely set aside and a new issue made. Its value was to be based on revenue from tariff and taxation, which were to be paid in specie or good money, but exchequer bills, too, were taken at par. With this new money Houston expected to be very economical and he succeeded. The salaries and fees of officers were greatly reduced, many offices were abolished, and the duties of remaining ones were increased. The War and Navy departments were merged, likewise the State and Postoffice departments. With salaries very low, and the practice of rigid economy, the finances

Digitized by Google

of Texas rose to a healthy state. The very attempt of moving the government was made a pretext to keep from paying out money; with the offices away from Austin and the records and archives at Austin Houston could avoid settlements by the excuse that the departments were separated from their books. Money was scarce; there was no circulating medium in the country. Commerce and trade was by way of exchange of produce, goods, and chattels. A note for ten dollars had to have expressed in it that property could be received instead.

I had but little surveying to do, so I opened a farm on some land I owned on Little River. I engaged men, to be paid in property, who were to live with me and work; they were young men and soon tired of a life with no neighbors, and left after we had got in a field and planted some corn. It was a very dry year and the corn made little. I, too, deserted the farm the greater part of the time. Later I got a family to come and stay who remained for three years, and the place was much improved. With my stock collected on the farm, I later settled on it as my home.

The president succeeded in making treaties with the more formidable tribes of Indians, and at last with all. Those treaties were of great benefit to Texas, and highly creditable to Sam Houston's policy. But small parties of renegades, or outlaws from tribes, still committed depredations now and then. That fall four Indians stole some horses from Monroe's settlement, six miles from my farm, and being more careless than usual in getting away they were easily overtaken by ten or twelve whites. The fight took place during a big gust of rain, which prevented the Indians seeing the men approach until they were right on them. They rushed for their horses but these were beyond control in the storm so they rallied around two mesquite trees and, having no guns, they drew their bows and arrows. Their bowstrings were wet and could not be used to advantage. Neither would the guns of the whites fire, so they used them as clubs, beating the Indians to death.

Digitized by Google

9. The Expedition to the Rio Grande under General Somervell and the Battle of Mier, 1842[14]

Notwithstanding our financial depression and inability to keep a regular army, our independence was acknowledged by the leading powers of Europe and by the United States. As early as 1836 we made a proposition to annex ourselves to the United States, but that government, at that time and up to the times of which I now speak, rejected us and showed no partiality for us. England and France (perhaps the intrigue was more British) took advantage of the indifference of the United States and of their influence over Mexico to demand the recognition of our independence.

At the formation of our government we declared the Rio Grande from its mouth to its head our western boundary. The European governments in their intercessions in our behalf supported our claims, which we continued to keep prominently before the world. Santa Anna appeared not unwilling to enter into negotiations, but asserted that we had no right to a great part of the territory claimed—that we could not possibly claim farther west than the San Antonio River, and to make a show in the case sent General Vasquez with five hundred men to take possession of San Antonio in March, 1842.

It was in reality a plundering or guerrilla party. Vasquez could stay no time, as we could within a few days without a general call on the country have a sufficient force there to capture him, but it took the people by surprise that a robbing party of that size could start secretly from Mexico upon an expedition of eight or ten days and we know nothing about it whatever in time to make counter preparations. Such a clamor was made that Houston called Congress together and even recommended a bill for defensive operations. Congress hastily convened, passed a bill leaving it to General Houston to determine the number of men and the extent of offensive operations to be adopted, and for the whole of it appropriated fifty thousand dollars with no money in the treasury, except the exchequer bills which would at once have depreciated more than the old-fashioned Texas

[14]This account should be compared with the other narratives cited in The Quarterly, XXIII, 112-140. There are many discrepancies.

Digitized by Google

money. General Houston was not to blame, it can easily be seen, but he was more censured that year for not complying with the passions of the people than at any other time.

Captain Eliot, the British minister to our government, was ever close about the president, watching all that went on, and, as fast as communication could be made in that slow-moving time, reporting to his government. Apart from British interest, I believe, he was really friendly to Texas and gave no credit to Santa Anna for his plundering expedition. The latter was urged the more to enter into negotiations. But to make a better show, he started another expedition. On the first of September General Woll with a thousand men of the regular army and one piece of artillery entered San Antonio, respecting the rights of property according to civilized warfare, but missing it with the rights of persons, for he took the judge and court, then in session, with every lawyer and prominent man he could find—which means every American—and sent them without delay prisoners to the City of Mexico.

The news went like wildfire over the country. Within a few days the people from the west gathered on the Salado, four miles from San Antonio, under Colonel Caldwell, only waiting for more men to take the effensive. Woll had no such incentive to wait, attacked the Texans immediately before they should gain more men, and was badly defeated—not, however, before he had shown his Mexican proclivities, for a company of twenty Texans who attempted to join Caldwell were massacred by him, only two escaping. He retreated to San Antonio, and early next morning started back to Mexico. The Texans pursued, and late in the evening came in sight of the Mexicans on the Rio Hondo. Line of battle was formed, Hays, in command of a company, was about to charge, when Colonel Moore, the commander, ordered a halt, and retired a short distance to await reinforcements. During the night the Mexicans went on by a forced march, and as the Texans had gathered in haste, without preparation for a campaign, they could not follow them far.

There was now furious excitement, and everybody was calling for war. Companies formed throughout the central and western part of the country; but in the east and in the frontier counties the people were slower to organize, though just as incensed about

Digitized by Google

matters. The latter had settled down to peace from Indian fighting, and wanted to continue their farming and other occupations. But as the president showed no sign of supporting a campaign he was denounced by all. Organization proceeded; chance was depended on for supplies.

There were few volunteers from Milam County, but about the first of October I set out in company with a young man by the name of Wiley Jones to join the expedition at San Antonio. After a drouth which had lasted all summer and caused crop failure, the weather changed to an extreme of rain. We were delayed at Austin by the rains, but swam our horses across the Colorado by the side of a little canoe, the ferryboat having been washed away. We reached San Antonio about the first of November. There was then not a house on our road between Austin and San Antonio.

Six or seven hundred men were gathered at San Antonio, and in two weeks the number increased to twelve hundred, but about two hundred left again. Many prominent military characters were there, among the rest General Burleson. While it is a fact that the movement was entirely Texan—few from Louisiana and Arkansas being able to reach us in time; still it was apparent that a great portion of the men had never been in service before. The older officers, especially those from central and eastern Texas, were few. I believe there was a keg or two of powder divided out among us and some lead. Breadstuffs were out of the question, and so was everything else in the way of provisions except beef. San Antonio and the scant settlements around had been plundered by the Mexicans as well as drained by former Texas troops that rallied there. We collected with difficulty about two hundred beeves whose owners, I suppose, received pay for them some ten years later when we had money.

One may suppose that General Houston looked on all this with amazement. As for his foreign policy it was a diplomatic secret; some of his intimate confidential friends may have known it. It was one of his characteristics to be reticent about his plans, and in this instance there was the seal of secrecy proper in international affairs to make him withhold information from the public. At the time I knew no more about it than any other

Digitized by Google

Texan and joined with the mass in the outcry against him, but a year later I found sufficient apology for him.

As he could not prevent our march he concluded to take charge of it, at least so far as to legalize the expedition, and so keep us from being pronounced filibusters and pirates in case of disaster. Brigadier-general Somervell, who had not long before been elected for the militia, was appointed our commander. We had expected and favored Burleson, but as he was willing to retire, and as Somervell had been a lieutenant-colonel under Burleson at San Jacinto and was an old officer, the appointment gave satisfaction.

An organization had taken place with all who, like myself, came unattached. I found some eight or ten men from Milam County, some of whom had been in my command of minutemen. Four or five other Milam County men had attached themselves to a Washington County company. Captain Pearson, who had been surveyor in Milam County before the revolution, but who now lived in Montgomery County, wanted a captaincy. Including the mess of Milam County men which I had made up and which Captain Pearson had joined, I was able to get together twenty men, and so we organized with this number and elected him captain. We had no lieutenant and no regular sergeant. There were several other squads of that kind called companies. Captain Eastland, an old frontiersman and captain in the service, had about twenty men from the vicinity of La Grange. The company I was in was called the Milam County company; it and Captain Eastland's company kept close together. The two would not have made a full company.

Colonel James R. Cook from Washington County was elected colonel. Washington County had four distinct companies, or about a hundred and twenty-five men in the field. As there were about twenty-five companies, numbering in all nearly a thousand men, we divided the forces on the evening of the first day from San Antonio, while camped on the Medina, and elected Joseph L. Bennett colonel of the second regiment. From what I remember it seems to me that General Somervell had no regular staff but that different officers at different times served in that capacity during that short campaign.

According to military rules General Houston's instructions

Digitized by Google

were not made known at the time; perhaps not even to the most intimate staff officer. I heard of them from Hosuton himself next year when in Congress. In substance they were: to proceed with extreme caution to the Rio Grande, to cross it only when there was no possibility of an obstruction to recrossing, and to venture no general or partial action unless victory was certain in advance. The intention was to make a demonstration—to show the world we could occupy the country we claimed and beyond it, and to maintain our occupation longer than the Mexicans could occupy our own soil. To this was added a comment in substance that should the fate of war be against us in defeat and loss, with the army under the government's control, the consequences would be self-apparent; and if we were successful still the future must be uncertain, especially if a quantity of property were thrown on our hands. The people of Texas had just been pacified and quieted sufficiently to go to work and rise by industry and economy, leaving the Mexicans to Providence; but with military success—the greater the worse for us—the people would abandon the plow, turn to adventurers and guerrillas, and the final would be, if not in the end defeat, at least a loss in character and honor with no real profit. As I review the past in maturer age, my conviction is that it was a sensible and statesmanlike view of the situation. At that time, however, I went with the mass of my companions in condemning Houston.

It was about the 19th of November while we camped on the Medina at the crossing of the road to Presidio that the final organization took place. Next morning we were ordered to abandon that road, and strike across to the Laredo road. The object was to deceive the Mexicans—that their spies might announce our coming on the first mentioned road, and the watch on the other be abandoned. Not an hour after we started on the march, it began raining and continued to do so for three days. By the course we took it was thirty miles to the Laredo road through a sandy postoak country. The route became very boggy, so that half a dozen horses could not follow each other without the rear one sinking down. In the three days it took us to make that distance we wearied our horses immensely. We had no wagon and very few pack animals. The beeves we were driving along

Digitized by Google

for food had to be scattered and driven abreast. After reaching solid ground the road was comparatively good.

We reached the Nueces in the latter part of November, and delayed there three days to build a bridge on which we could cross our horses, as the stream was about fifteen feet deep and very boggy even on the sides of extraordinarily steep banks. The construction of this bridge certainly displayed some military backwoods genius.

We were fairly on the other side about the first of December, and within fifty miles of Laredo, which we expected to reach by a forced march in two days. Hays's company captured two Mexican spies, who had been sent out to verify some rumor that we had changed our course. After marching about thirty miles, we camped about thirty miles from Laredo. That night the two Mexicans made their escape and informed the Mexican garrison at New Laredo of our approach.

We marched on the next day, and at nightfall were ten or twelve miles from the town. At daylight we were drawn up in front of it, on its outer edge. I need not describe the different maneuvers undertaken in the night to get a part of our men on the other side of the river, as we did not need to get them there for the reason that the news reached us some time before day that the Mexican garrison had fled. After daylight Colonel Bell went into town with a flag of truce. In a very little while he returned with the alcalde and two leading men by his side, who with great politeness and submission tendered the surrender of the town, intimating at the same time that they asked protection, as they were on the territory we claimed, and could not help submitting to the Mexicans when we neglected to occupy the place.

We immediately went to camp, at first about two miles above the town in a field near the river; but finding neither grass nor forage, we moved in the afternoon about two miles below the town where there was some short grass for our horses. The usual orders had been given to keep in line, to observe the customary discipline, not to leave the ranks unless by special permission, and particularly not to trespass in any way on the citizens. In spite of this precaution several hundred men found their way into town—perhaps, not all together, and, I regret to say, col-

Digitized by Google

lected quite a quantity of all kinds of articles, especially of light weight; nor should I like to give a description of some of these articles collected. It created a dissatisfaction and considerable difference among us. All the older soldiers, those who had done the most service and especially those who as prisoners had experienced the kindness of Mexican women, were much excited on the subject.

When we were established in our last camp, between four and five o'clock of the day, the alcalde with men and women appealed to General Somervell for the return of the plundered articles; the result was that all were ordered brought together to be returned the next morning to the Mexicans. Although the majority of our men had been opposed to the course of those who had gone into town, still many, themselves incapable of such conduct, now wanted to justify it on the ground of the right to retaliate for Mexican outrages on our border. This created a sensation about which perhaps it is as well to say little, but the next morning four hundred dissatisfied men, some of them organized in companies, left us and returned home. Colonel Cook, the commander of the first regiment, and a number of officers of earlier prominence went with them. As to other causes for this departure, it may be said that there was no appearance of a Mexican army; General Woll with about a thousand men was above Presidio, General Ampudia with a still larger but scattered force was near Matomoros, and it may have been known to some of the men that General Somervell expected to remain only a few days longer on the Rio Grande and anticipated no fight. In view of such prospects they thought they might as well leave at once. It left us about six hundred men.

The town of Guerrero is located thirty-five miles below Laredo, on the west side and two miles from the Rio Grande. It is on the Salado River, a deep stream that is not fordable, and joins the Rio Grande a short distance below the town. We reached a point opposite the town on Saturday, the 10th of December, after a three days' march from Laredo. At Laredo we had obtained about two hundred pounds of flour, which had been divided out immediately, two pounds to a man, and we had also collected a few beeves. On our way to the point named we passed a ranch

Digitized by Google

every few miles, and each night camped in a field where we found good corn cut down and shocked up. There were numbers of sheep, too, about the ranches, and we had plenty of mutton. Horses and men fared well for the time.

Arrived at the point opposite Guerrero, we effected a crossing with three canoes, obtained in our advance. Half of the men of a company would go over at a time, and stand to catch the horses driven in the river by the other half, who in turn then crossed. It took us till after dark to get through and camp in a field of corn. Early the next morning a flag of truce, under an escort, was sent to town to demand a contribution of five thousand dollars in specie, less perhaps the price of some flour and coffee mentioned. We passed the day until the middle of the afternoon. I think the flour and coffee were delivered to us early. About four o'clock the alcalde and a committee from the town were announced outside our lines. Their conference with the general and a number of officers was near our camp. I may not have heard all that was said, but the alcalde stated that all the moneyed men with the precious metal whether in money or jewelry had left before our arrival, only poor folks were there, and he could not raise more than two hundred dollars, which he held up tied in a handkerchief. When this was announced to the whole force, the cry was to march at once to the town and enforce our demands. Horses were gathered up and saddled without waiting for any command, and no time was lost till we were in line.

It had already begun thundering and lightning, and just as our front arrived at the entrance to the town the rain poured. The storm continued and was such that we were forced to turn to the banks of the Salado on our left and dismount and wait. We waited the whole night while it stormed. After daylight, during a short cessation of the rain, we were ordered to mount and return to camp. This we did, all met and our guns wet, and we had considerable trouble after returning to camp setting the fences on fire to warm and dry by. It continued to rain the whole day, the next night, and part of the next day.

When the rain ceased half a dozen nicely painted flatboats, each one capable of carrying from eight to ten horses, were brought

Digitized by Google

from the Rio Grande up the Salado in front of our camp, and we were ordered to recross and make our camp on the opposite side. It took until Friday, the sixteenth, fully to accomplish this, and on that day General Somervell issued a general order for us to take up the line of march to some point eastward, on the return route to San Antonio.

The rain was certainly a providential interference in behalf of the people of Guerrero. I could have joined them myself in a Te Deum for their delivery. And it seems that all the men were satisfied, not saying anything more about troubling the town. But when the order to return was issued a new outcry came forth; men declared that they had not had satisfaction, that they could at least remain a week longer, go down to Mier and enforce a contribution, or at least collect a thousand horses to take back with cattle and sheep. To this I myself had no objection; that kind of property belonged to rich men not living there, and I had looked for nothing less than to get at least one good Spanish horse in compensation for this and former service not paid for.

The general said nothing, and the agitation continued during the night. It appeared that the men were nearly equally divided —one party chose to obey orders, the other preferred to remain on the river, go down as far as Mier, collect all the horses we could on both sides by taking all the boats down with us, and levying a contribution on Mier, taking it out in supplies, clothing, and portable property of any kind. The general made no remonstrance, and by nine o'clock the portion of the force in favor of returning commenced to leave, the more prominent men, such as Colonel Bell, Captain Hays, and others, going with it.

We who remained moved camp only a short distance to dryer ground and grass, and stopped to reorganize and count. There were a few over three hundred men who remained. The reorganization consisted in merging some fractions of companies into one, and in electing Captain Fisher major and commander. He had commanded a company at San Jacinto, had been secretary of war during Houston's first administration, and was now in command of a company from Fort Bend. He had become a strong opponent of General Houston and, to review the party, most all the leading men were opponents of Houston; perhaps

Digitized by Google

he had no personal or political friend left among us. There were many in the party who positively believed that no Mexican force could be got together strong enough to defeat us, or even to damage us much. A bitterness against the Mexicans was expressed that I never heard equalled before or since. Young men just grown up and newcomers were equally swayed in the matter. The Milam County company, my messmates and nearest companions, were at one with the rest in feeling and eager to go on. I would have been rather glad to go back with Somervell, but had not the courage to express myself.

We moved that same day a short distance down the river to a ranch where we could camp in another cornfield. We took with us all the boats; they were maneuvered by a number of men in charge of General Thomas Jefferson Green, flew the Texas flag, and were called our navy. At the ranch where we camped the first night we found a tribe of Karankua Indians, not above forty in all. We took the warriors prisoners, disarmed a dozen of them and put them on the boats, and left the rest where we found them; but the next day we set free the ones we had taken with us, and returned them their bows and arrows. We marched that day ten or twelve miles and camped. We marched very slowly, camping at night in fields, and with scouts out gathering horses on both sides of the river.

On the 22nd of December we reached a point three miles from Mier. The next morning a guard of fifty men was left behind with the horses. Accompanied by fifteen mounted men, we marched on foot to Mier. We entered the town unopposed, marched to the square, halted, and learned that Canales with two hundred men had been there the night before. So far as I know no intelligence of the movement of the Mexican forces was obtained. A requisition for flour, coffee, and other supplies such as shoes and clothing was made out at once. The Mexicans brought the things from cellars; some had to be dug up from where they had been buried, and all were not produced by three o'clock in the afternoon. Owners of the goods and all men of means had left the town. The next difficulty was to get the things to camp. The Mexicans declared their teams and animals were out and could not be obtained that day. We could neither

Digitized by Google

carry them to camp nor divide them there; an agreement was made with the Mexicans that, under penalty of having their town destroyed, they should bring the goods to the bank of the Rio Grande by Saturday. It was understood that they were to be brought to a point lower down and nearer town than our camp.

We returned and marched slowly down the river to the point designated. There was a big bend in the river, and some of our scouts who were out for horses failed to get in on the night of the 23rd, so we did not camp at the place designated until the afternoon of the 24th. The alcalde with other Mexicans of note had arrived with the army from Matamoros. He invited us to come and get the articles, since he was not allowed to bring them. The officers had little say in the excitement that followed. The men were the grand movers, and prepared at once and without any caution to cross the river and go back to town.

The day had been cloudy and rain commenced just as the force got over the river; a slow drizzle continued for more than twenty-four hours. The horses were left on this side the river under a guard of fifty men. Twelve or fifteen men were allowed to go along on horseback as scouts. I asked permission of Fisher to be allowed to ride, as I was lame. Five or six days before I had come in conflict with a prickly pear bush and a long thorn had entered my knee, giving me much trouble. The wound had been much aggravated by my walk to town two days before. Fisher said there were already too many on horseback, that they would have to dismount before reaching town. He advised me to remain in camp with the guard, and I did. It was sundown and getting dusk as they left the bank of the river. They numbered two hundred and fifty-eight men. Within the next thirty-six hours four returned; of the others a few over a hundred got back after having been kept prisoners eighteen months under immense hardships and suffering; the rest were killed or died.

It was not an hour before rifles and musketry were heard and, soon after, the noise of Mexican cannon. It seems that with but faint opposition they were allowed to march to the center of the town, and to take possession of a block on the square where they maintained themselves all night. The Mexican cannon and the guns on our side we heard at intervals all night. During the

Digitized by Google

morning the firing increased. Two men, one on foot and one on horseback, came into camp. They had not been together during the night, and neither could give much information. One described the Mexican force as very large.

We watered and fed the horses; there were over three hundred captured ones to be looked after, but corn was plentiful.

About ten o'clock I and George Hancock, late a resident of Austin, went to a high bluff up the river about half a mile from camp. We could see the smoke of firearms and masses of Mexicans outside of the town moving about, but nothing more definite. The rain was less and the clouds higher. For some ten minutes about twelve we heard exceedingly heavy firing, the rifles predominating. The Mexicans then seemed to cease firing, and in a little while there was no more on either side. A considerable smoke arose. We imagined our side had perhaps carried the day, went back to camp to report, and there waited till three o'clock for news. Then we two went down the river to a higher bluff still nearer town, but could see nothing, and returned to camp. The outlook was gloomy.

Buckman, a lieutenant with whom I had been frequently associated in frontier service, was captain of the guard. He urged me to take command, but I refused as the guard was a mixture from companies of men from all over the Republic and unknown to me. When he next asked my advice, I said to remain in camp till after night, move off in the dark a mile or so, but return in the morning. They would perhaps have followed this advice, but Captain Bonnell, who had been more or less in Texas service but who at this time had no command, was one of those who could not believe that disaster really might overtake Texans; he declared that he thought there could be no dainger in remaining, that our men were not whipped but only delayed by some accident. However, all except Bonnell and four or five with him prepared to leave at a moment's notice.

The rain had ceased and, although it was a cloudy night, the moon gave a little light. Some time after dark we distinctly heard the words "Bring over the boat, bring over the boat!" coming from over the river. Buckman and several of us ran down to the river, but no reply came to our challenge. Some said

Digitized by Google

we had imagined the call. Bonnell declared he had been listening intently and had not heard it. Just then the words came again and Bonnell did hear. But still we could get no other words to our questioning. Bonnell returned to his belief that we had heard nothing. Buckman said he had heard enough, and thought it time to leave camp. He called for all who wanted to go with him, and mustered about twenty, each having from one to two extra horses; one man went off leading five with their heads and tails tied together.

Probably twenty-two or twenty-three of us still remained in camp. I prepared to go, and there were thirteen with me. Each had a led horse with saddle, saddle bags, baggage, and provisions, but in general the horses were those of our messmates who had gone into Mier. I brought home to his family the horse of Wiley Jones, who started out with me. The rain had again commenced. After going about a mile and a half, hardly knowing where, as we had left the river, we heard the sound of a gun some distance off. It was after midnight; we camped. At daylight we mounted again to start back to the river, but halted for a council to determine which way the river lay. The rain had ceased, but it was very cloudy. We were at an open place on a trail. One of the men, Pierce from Washington County, being well mounted, volunteered to go back and look about the camp we had left to find out if those remaining there were still safe and if any more news had been heard from Mier. I lent him my pistol, and he started, accompanied by another of the party whose name I cannot remember. We were to wait for them till nine o'clock; then, if they had not returned, to go on without them. At nine the men became anxious to go on. I went back to hunt Pierce, knowing that the men would not go far without me. I had not gone over three hundred yards before I heard talking in the brush on my left. I turned thither and found about a dozen of the men we had left in camp the night before, and with them two of my messmates escaped out of Mier, Chalk and St. Clair. We all returned to my party of men, and delayed for Chalk and St. Clair to eat something; they had been long without food. By that time Pierce and his companion had got back. They reported that they had found the camp deserted by all except Bonnell and Hicks, who were at

Digitized by Google

the river bank talking to Mexicans on the other side; the Mexicans had with them one of our men, a prisoner, to explain the situation.

Chalk and St. Clair told me that about the time the firing ceased at noon the day before the Mexicans sent a flag of truce to our men, offering to allow them to capitulate, and promising to treat them as prisoners of war—not to march them to Mexico City, but to keep them in the valley of the Rio Grande—subject, however, to ratification by the government and Santa Anna. Our men were divided as to what they should do. Half of them were tired of fighting; ten or twelve had been killed and fifteen to twenty were wounded. The others declared they would not surrender and wanted to fight their way out. The leaders of the latter called for a hundred men, but did not get the response expected; they called for fifty, but got only about half that number; then they gave up. The Mexicans talked flatteringly; among other things they declared that they would not keep them long, as peace negotiations were then on foot. This was news; the Texans knew nothing of such negotiations.

St. Clair was one of those who wanted to fight his way out, and he determined to escape somehow. He induced Chalk to hide with him behind a bunch of cane stacked in a corner of a room where they with others were confined. After nightfall they slipped out of the town. In jumping a wall St. Clair sprained his ankle, and was badly lamed. He had already lost one boot; it had been pulled off by a Mexican as he got over a fence going into Mier. They finally reached our camp on the river at daylight. The men took a boat over to them, and then all the men in camp, except Bonnell and Hicks left, each with two horses. They came up with us as I have already described.

We learned later that Bonnell and Hicks, after talking with the Mexicans across the river, returned to camp and also started off with two horses apiece, but missed our trail, got lost in a chaparral thicket, remained lost till late the next day, and then struck our trail again. In the meantime the Mexicans must have passed beyond them in pursuit; for a hundred men had been crossed over to our camp in our boats. These men mounted our remaining horses and set out in pursuit of Bonnell, Hicks, and the rest of us. They must have been nearly up with us the first night

Digitized by Google

after we all got together and went on; but they then turned back, found Bonnell and Hicks, who had at last struck our trail, behind them. They carried the two men back and, while busy plundering our camp, sent Bonnell under guard into a boat. Hicks was told to push the boat from shore and to jump in. He obeyed, pushing the boat from shore, but jumped in the other direction and made for the bank of the river. Guns were fired after him but he escaped, and he, without so much as a pocketknife for a weapon, walked all the way to Victoria, swimming streams and sustaining life in a manner hard to conjecture. It is supposed the Mexican guard, exasperated at Hicks's escape, shot Bonnell in cold blood, as that was the last heard of him.

We had a very good open route during the first day, but in attempting to travel at night, got retarded, and at ten o'clock found ourselves at the same place that we had been at dark. We proceeded at daylight and that evening arrived at a watering spot known as the Palo Blanco, on a trail leading to San Patricio. The place was only sixty miles from Mier.

Buckman and his party, who were ahead of us, also got lost on their way from the Rio Grande, and we fell in with them in a few days, but did not remain with them. After we reached and crossed the Nueces we separated into small parties, the better to find game, which was scarce except for wild horse. Chalk, St. Clair, and a young man named Oldham remained with me, and we four were the first to arrive at the San Antonio River, at Goliad, then unoccupied. The river was swimming. We saw six men over on the other side who had just crossed on a raft of logs and doors drifted down from houses above. They offered it to us, if one of us would swim over for it. In response to our questions concerning something to eat, they said they had just killed a fat wild horse and if we joined them at their intended camping place some six miles further on we could share it with them. They camped on the trail to Lockhart's house on the Guadalupe. We hurried on and found them waiting for us with plenty of broiling horse meat stuck on sticks. Those six men were Tom Green, Henry and Ben McCulloch, Captain Gillespie, Katy, and the name of the sixth I have forgotten.[15]. With the first three I

[15]Probably Dr. Edmund J. Felder, who, according to his granddaughter, Mrs. Eliza M. Fitzpatrick, returned with the McCulloughs.—L. A. E.

Digitized by Google

was well acquainted. They told me they had left the Rio Grande on the morning of the day of the battle at Mier. They had not been missed. I knew they had been the chief scouts up to that time. They said they had found out that the Mexicans were massing, and that they had come to the conclusion that there was very little prospect for our success without more rule and discipline among us. They could not make any of the leading men believe in the danger; Fisher himself had declared he had no control of us; and so they thought they would leave in time before disaster should overtake us.

The final was exactly as they, with their not inconsiderable military experience, had foreseen. Doubtless there were others among us whose experience should have been of equal service to them. But it was not the officers who precipitated the attack; it was a party of leading men who declared they would go at once at nightfall in the rain without maneuver or reconnoissance; and that hasty action decided against them. After they found what they were in for, they still believed they could fight out, and there are survivors who to this day believe they could have done so.

The Mexican promises, as is well known, were not kept. Of course, there was the pretext that the capitulation was subject to Santa Anna's ratification and that he would not ratify it. They must have had spies among us at Guerrero, and before we separated from the party under Semervell, for they were well informed of the separation at the time of the surrender, that we were acting on our own account, contrary to orders of General Somervell, and, therefore, not a legalized body of men according to rules of war, and so not entitled to the treatment and privileges of prisoners of war.

The news of the defeat had not the bad effect on the country which might have been expected. The Mexicans, overjoyed at their victory, did not attempt another invasion. When the subject of our independence later came up in Mexico and Santa Anna boasted that he had defeated us, the English and French ministers countered him by using the very plea he had used as an excuse for mistreating our prisoners, namely, that we were no legitimate force by rules of war, to show that, therefore, he had *not* defeated a Texas force.

Digitized by Google

We all reached Lockhart's house the next afternoon, obtained supplies of eatables, crossed the Guadalupe River the next day in a canoe, swimming our horses, and separated. Chalk,[16] Tom Oldham, and I crossed the Colorado at La Grange, bringing to that place the first news of the defeat, and reached home on the 19th of January, 1843.

10. Congressman and Legislator, 1843-1846

In the latter part of May, 1843, while I was away in Washington County, a party of citizens nominated me for congress in opposition to Captain Hill who had become a candidate early. Captain Hill's merits as a soldier might have entitled him to the position over me, but he was personally unpopular, and most of the votes he received were on party grounds. He was out and out for Houston.

We here in Texas had nothing to do with the parties in the United States. We were Sam Houston or anti-Sam Houston; Eastern Texas was largely for and Western Texas against him. The East had the population; the West had a representation of counties and territory that balanced the Eastern votes in Congress. A number of the Western counties represented had no residents in them. Those, claiming to be residents of such counties and living for safety elsewhere, could by virtue of a special proviso in the constitution hold an election in the county of their temporary residence for representatives of the depopulated counties. Thus it came to pass that four or five representatives and one or two senators were elected by half a dozen votes in all on both sides. A story was afloat about how such elections were held. Five or six men who claimed to be residents of a depopulated county would hold a meeting. If there were two candidates for the same office, the nomination would be decided by a game of cards and the successful candidate would be returned by a unanimous vote. There was no danger of the candidates differing in

[16]"Whitfield Chalk was a well known citizen of Bell County, whom I knew personally. He escaped from the Mexicans after the surrender at Mier, returned to Texas, and was not 'confined in the Castle of Perote.' This fact technically excluded him from the benefit of the pension act, and while I was in the State Senate I obtained his pension for him by an amendment to the general appropriation bill (see Gen. Laws, 21st Legislature, p. 77)."—Letter from the Hon. Geo. W. Tyler, of Belton, to the Editor.

Digitized by Google

politics; the Western section was ninety-nine per cent anti-Houston.

Milam county had a number of extreme admirers of Houston and a number of strong opponents; the rest were indifferent. At that time I was strong with the West; we were called Western or Eastern according to our bias for or against Houston. I was elected by a small majority, and on personal popularity I believe. My election illustrates the disposition of the people at that time, particularly of the element that had immigrated since the battle of San Jacinto, which took the chief part in the elections. I had no experience in legislation; Captain Hill, my senior in years and it may be in military matters, had been in congress several times from Washington County before coming to Milam, and he was a man highly respected generally. The election next year, when I was again a candidate, I think still better illustrates this disposition of the people to which I refer. I had become acquainted with and had fairly investigated Houston's course. I found him as I thought more right than wrong. I had changed my politics to a considerable extent, and had endorsed and voted for some of Houston's measures irrespective of my standing with the Western party. My situation gave me the casting vote. I had been endorsed by my constituency, and partially so by Houston, and yet in the canvass a new man, who had been in the country but two years, who was without service, and who had offered himself the year before but withdrew after my nomination, ran against me, and notwithstanding the prestige and experience I had gained I was elected over him by only seven votes.

During the session of Congress in 1843 I gained an insight into statesmanship as well as party tactics. I studied Sam Houston's financial system as well as his coquetting with England and France through their ministers. Had this last matter been known publicly its object would have been frustrated by the clamor of the people. Years afterward Houston was stigmatized by some of his friends as an opponent of annexation to the Union and to American principles, and as pandering to European interest.

During Lamar's administration Houston had been a representative in congress from an Eastern county and had originated the colonization scheme. Contractors were to introduce a certain number of families within defined limits west and north. Heads of families were to receive 640 acres and single men 320 acres

Digitized by Google

free. The contractors were to be allowed to bargain for half of this land for their assistance, and the same contractors were to be allowed ten sections of land for every one hundred settlers introduced and located. Several contracts were entered into. Two that were actually carried out were Fisher and Miller's colony of Germans and Castro's colony on the Medina. A contract was also concluded with Mercer and Peters for the introduction of American settlers on the Brazos. It was, however, never fully carried out and encumbered the state's domain with law suits.

Since our constitution granted the right of citizenship and of voting after six months residence to any race, European governments early sought to control through colonization and by the European vote to prevent American institutions. A measure known as the Franco-Texian bill was introduced in congress in 1841. Ostensibly it was to provide protection of the frontier; it was proposed to settle eight thousand armed Frenchmen on the Brazos, from the mouth of the Paluxy upwards—a territory at the time one hundred and fifty miles from any settlement. The bill was rejected on account of the public clamor against it. Every American backwoodsman knew that such people so isolated could not make their own living for years. Unacquainted with Indian warfare they would have become a prey and bait for savages. Besides three years later, at the election of 1844, the whole republic did not have eight thousand votes. The absurdity of the whole scheme is apparent.

Objections could hardly be made to Castro's colony; it was on a rather small scale, and to be French and German mixed. The German colony to be settled on the Guadalupe above Seguin, although on a larger scale, was not impracticable. Both were in easy communication with the coast and limited to three years for the settlement. The time expired in 1843 but the colonies were not settled; their contracts were forfeited, and they had to apply to Congress for relief to get an extension of time. The contracts had never been published. When fairly examined it was revealed that the German one had been made with a kind of syndicate of European grandees, flourishing their titles in it as dukes, counts, princes, and *Herr Vons,* at the very least. Such men could never be citizens of Texas, and if they continued residence in their own land their influence was undesired in this. It was in fact a scheme from England to crowd into this country a foreign ele-

Digitized by Google

ment to prevent with their vote our annexation to the United States.

In the meantime England and France made to our president their proposition to guarantee our independence of Mexico with the important proviso that we remain independent and never annex to another country. It was easy to keep this proviso from the public under the rule of secresy in diplomatic matters. Had it been known there would have been violent opposition at once. It was only a proposition and Houston dallied with the foreign representatives, letting them believe that it might be accepted when Mexico should come to the front to enter into negotiations. The whole of it on the Texas side was a scheme to bring about interest in the United States, to arouse the advocates of the Monroe doctrine, and to let them know that England and France were considering American affairs against American interests. With the Texas people kept unsuspecting, the secret of the proposed negotiations with Europe carefully found its way to Washington and had the desired effect.

After a long debate as to whether or not we could do so we held a secret session in Congress in 1843; the lower house in Texas like that of the United States was not expected to hold secret sessions, though the Senate frequently did. This session was called for the benefit of the Mier prisoners; several days were taken up in making an appropriation of money, clothing, and other necessaries for them; but we also gained much diplomatic knowledge. The efforts of England and France were brought in, and I learned of the intrigue going on with those countries for the purpose of creating interest in the United States.

That interest began to act in the early part of 1844. Statesmen of both parties, North and South, but more of the Democrats, demanded the immediate annexation of Texas to the United States. Up to this time we had been treated very coolly by the United States; she had actually interfered with us to Mexico's interest. But a great change in her attitude now took place. The people of Texas, on the other hand, being at peace, with business and financial matters reviving, were becoming indifferent to the matter of annexation.

But to go back to personal matters, that congress of 1843 was my schooling. I think I can boast that my course was independent, and brought me the rewards of independence in notice and

Digitized by Google

respect. At the close of it moneyed affairs were as low as ever. Merchants had depreciated the currency to one-half. My pay, nominally three dollars a day, was in reality only a dollar and a half in good money. At Houston's request we passed a bill requiring the custom house officers to receive it at its market price instead of at its face value as heretofore. This brought the currency up to par, and it remained at par afterward. During the congress of 1844 we were paid in silver.

The year 1843 went out and 1844 came in very wet for farming purposes, immigration, and settling of the frontier. But the weather was dry in the summer, and with good crops everything revived by fall. Besides again sitting in Congress, I carried on a small farm, and did a little surveying.

At the assembling of congress we were met with the news of the prospect of annexation. In the year's election Anson Jones had been chosen as Sam Houston's successor in politics over Gen. Burleson on the opposition ticket. The congress of 1844 adjourned before the United States congress passed the joint resolution for the annexation of Texas, so a called session was necessary which took place in June, 1845. We ratified and accepted the terms; the country revived, money became more plentiful, and progress and prosperity commenced.

At the regular election in 1845 I was elected without opposition to the next congress, which never sat. The constitution formed by our convention was adopted by a vote of the people on the 13th of October. At a new general election on the fifteenth of December I was elected a member of the first legislature of the State by a large majority.

On the 16th of February, 1846, the first legislature met at Austin, and remained in session till the first of May. Much business was done in changing and making laws to suit the new order of things.

With annexation a new era commenced. We were not supplicants to the Union. If our leaders' actions brought about the agitation in the United States which changed her course to our favor it is all to the credit of the statesmanship of those leaders. Houston must have conceived the idea of creating that agitation as early as the year 1840 through the colonization bills then introduced. He kept up the feint of pandering to English interest during his second administration, and when his projects became

Digitized by Google

known at the close of his second administration he could not directly declare himself, but left that for his successor Anson Jones to do. Houston himself lost many of his supporters and old friends who charged him with complicity with European powers against annexation. I defended him then in spite of my anti-Houston past, and would do so still more now could I find any one in these late years who does not see that his course was wise for Texas.

Personally I was pleased with becoming a citizen of the United States. As a boy I had imagined it the ideal government. I have never regretted annexation. It was said during the Civil War that our coming into the Union had been a mistake, but I think we would have been drawn into that war just the same, and have fared worse as a result of being actually conquered and annexed.

Had the South succeeded, I should have advocated under the Secession doctrine the immediate reestablishment of Texas independence. As it was I took sides with the South, regarding Texas as an ally to the other Southern States rather than to the Confederacy, and believing that I owed my allegiance to Texas and to no other country.

I think Texas is now reconciled to the issue of the Civil War. She was not actually a leader in Secession but followed, and on account of her geographical position could not have done otherwise. What I want particularly to stress is the actual independence of Texas at the time of her union with the States, and that the United States gained through Texas nearly one-half her territory including golden California. Texas furnished her quota of soldiers for the Mexican war, and with them as pilots General Scott marched with ten thousand men in six months from the coast to the city of Mexico. A dozen years later it took the French with eighty thousand two years to perform the same task.

11. Activity as a Surveyor from 1846 to 1857

I was married to Miss Lucinda Chalmers in December, 1845. Miss Chalmers was born in New York of Scotch and New England parentage, and came to Texas with her family when a child.

After returning from the Legislature in May, 1846, I laid off the town of Cameron for the county seat of Milam County. The

Digitized by Google

records, which were burned, probably showed that it was done by Howlet, the district-surveyor; he had the contract, but I did it for him at his request. Among the new counties created by the first legislature was that of Burleson; this was by my own special act. I had laid off the town of Caldwell in 1840. It was then destined for the county seat of such a county, and its citizens had been waiting for its formation.

I formed a partnership with George Green, my close companion in the San Jacinto campaign, and we kept a section of country west of the Brazos surveyed up for a hundred miles ahead of forming settlements. Our official position was that of deputy surveyors of Milam Land District, and our territory was bounded by the Brazos River on the east, by the waters of Little River on the west, and without limits northwest. However, I surveyed on the Leon River higher up in what is now Eastland County as late as 1852 and 1857.

Neill McLennan, a native of Scotland, who had come to Texas in 1835 and settled on the frontier, after annexation moved to the South Bosque River about eight miles from the present site of Waco. The Indians used to visit him, and demanded eatables as a sort of tribute for allowing a white man in the region; they had an idea that they were still sovereigns of the soil, though on peace terms with the Texans. By 1848 more settlers came in, and Captain Shapleigh P. Ross with a company of rangers was stationed near them for protection. I frequently passed through the country on surveying business. The lands on both sides of the Brazos had been surveyed, for some fifteen miles above the Waco Indian village, before the revolution of Texas, and was owned by private individuals. In 1837 I had been stationed at the Waco village and that early perceived how central to the territory of Texas it was. I saw that a road running from the northwestern or northern boundary via San Antonio to Laredo would have to cross here, pass over Little River at the Three Forks and cross the Colorado where Austin now stands. This would place the road on elevated ground above the swampy bottom lands of watercourses, and also avoid the broken, rocky country of branches of streams forking northwest. The line would have been good for a railroad; only one never talked of railroads in those days. The Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway follows much of this route, particularly west of the Brazos.

Digitized by Google

When at the Waco village in 1837, it appeared to me that it would be a good site for a town, and I never lost an opportunity to bring about the laying off of a town there. The opportunity came in the year 1848. General Chambers, to whom the land had been titled by the Mexican government, sold to Sydnor of Galveston and he authorized J. De Cordova, a general land agent and one of my principal customers, to dispose of it at a dollar an acre. At the same time he gave him power to create a subagent and to do whatever he thought best to make a quick sale of it, even at additional expense. Cordova desired me to cut it up into small tracts and sell for him. I told him of my idea of locating a town there, also that the title was imperfect and how to perfect it, which would have to be done before any sale whatever was made. This brought about another sale from Sydnor to N. A. Ware of Galveston and Jonas Butler, who had only a small share in it. They gave Cordova one-third of the land, which was two leagues, and a half of 320 acres in the northwest corner, which was to be laid off into a town. A delay occurred until the first of March, 1849, at which time I laid off only the main street and a number of lots which could be immediately disposed of. I sold them at five dollars apiece. They were mostly those on both sides of Bridge Street from the river to the square. I had been made subagent, but had no direct benefit from the sale, the proceeds going to the owners of the land not one of whom had ever seen it.

There were at that time about twenty families in what is now McLennan County. Captain Barron lived immediately above the town tract. No one lived on the land at the time. Native post oaks, peach trees planted by the Indians, bones, and old Indian fortifications were about. The family of Captain Ross and several other families were camped on the east side of the river ready to move into town, and on the day I surveyed it three or four men stood by and walked along with me carrying axes, ready to go to housebuilding. John McLennan, eldest son of Neill, who had accompanied me on many surveying trips, was then sheriff of Milam County to which the territory of McLennan County belonged. He was my principal assistant in laying off the town. Captain Ross took much interest in the formation of it, and believed in its future greatness.

For two years after this I held no commission as surveyor, but I was associated with William Oxsheer who did, and surveyed

Digitized by Google

some public lands with him or under his name. He was not with me in the laying off of the town of Waco.

I moved to Waco the first of February, 1851. I had already opened a farm on the Bosque near the McLennans. The legislature of 1849-'50 created the County of McLennan. The counties of Bell and Falls were created during the same session. I had given our representative, Colonel George E. Burney, the plan and frame of the bill for McLennan County so as to place Waco near the center. It passed accordingly, and the commissioners appointed to locate the county seat selected Waco. The owners of the town donated ten per cent of the lots and ten per cent of all proceeds of lots. A public sale was ordered on the tenth of June, 1850. The town had grown considerably, but the owners did not get high prices. They were present at the sale and closed up their contracts, made the deeds to lots and paid over funds collected to the commissioners for the County of McLennan. A singular circumstance happened in arranging the matter. As there were no lawyers about at the time, I, their acknowledged agent, was released by them for one day to act as attorney for the County of McLennan and City of Waco. Although the commissioners and the people demanded this course to insure fair play, there was no intention of any wrong on either side, and comparatively little trouble or litigation has ensued from that contract, or in connection with titles and boundaries. The County of McLennan was organized at the general election on the first Monday in August, 1850.

A change of district surveyor, whose office was in Milam County, took place at the same election. I took out another appointment for Milam Land District, and for some time I operated alone with hired assistance, and made more profits in the business than I ever did before or since. The younger Neill McLennan, son of Neill for whom the county was named and brother of John McLennan, joined me in the business in 1852, and we remained together as long as I continued to do work of any consequence. In 1844 David Kaufman introduced the first preemption bill in the senate and I carried it through the house. It was not made use of in my section of country until this time, 1852. I surveyed the first location and from then on until I quit official business the name of Erath or McLennan appeared on a thousand field notes of that kind of survey. I had kept the public lands surveyed up

Digitized by Google

in advance of the settlements; the vacant spots left behind were taken up by preemptors. The first settlers in Bosque County took preemptions; and the well known Norwegian settlement in that county had its origin at this time, 1853.

In the winter of 1853-'54 the legislature created the counties of Bosque and Coryell. I helped the commissioners who were appointed to locate the county seats, and with McLennan laid off the town of Meridian in the early part of '54. The lots were sold on the fourth of July, and the county organized at the general election on the first Monday in August.

In 1853 a belt of country embraced between the parallels of latitude 31° and 33° north and extending across the whole state was reserved for the benefit of the Pacific railroad, and the surveying of public lands therein prohibited. I refused to act as official surveyor under the circumstances. I moved from Waco to my farm on the Bosque, and would have preferred to retire from surveying, but was continually called on to give information, to show and resurvey lands, and to assist in dividing up and disposing of it to settlers. The knowledge I had of the land affairs of the central part of the State was constantly in demand.[17] Without my request an appointment was sent me from the district office, now located at Belton, to legalize my work.

In the latter part of May, 1855, McLennan and I led a party of thirty pioneers into the territory now Erath County. John M. Stephens, who owned the land where Stephenville now stands, was among them. The settlers agreed to choose their homes there and in the country round about; so we laid off the town of Stephenville; finished laying it off on the fourth of July. This settlement was then the farthest west of any on the waters of the Brazos. The settlers being strangers to the country were rather apprehensive of Indians, though the Indians were at peace at the time. I and McLennan were there several times that fall, giving information to encourage them. I entered into a sort of land agency to purchase or sell lands for settlers, but with little remuneration to myself.

The winter following the counties of Erath, Palo Pinto, and others were created. Erath was organized at the general election in August, 1856. There was also a called session of the legisla-

[17]Major Erath was popularly known as "The walking dictionary of the Land Office."—L. A. E.

Digitized by Google

ture in the summer of 1856 at which the Pacific railroad reservation law was repealed; however, the repeal did not go into effect until the first of March, 1857. Other laws regulating land affairs were also passed. By the neglect of parties, who had land surveyed but not returned, a number of surveys that I had made several years before became forfeited. They could be resurveyed or refiled by the first of March, but if a man had settled on such survey before that date he could hold a hundred and sixty acres of it as a preemption. In the fall of 1856 I showed a number of such surveys and other vacant lands to actual settlers, and Palo Pinto County became settled that winter on the west side of the Brazos.

Immigration now came in from the north and east settling in all those upper counties, and after the opening of the Pacific railroad reservation McLennan and I made a number of surveys in them. McLennan again went up in the summer, and we were both there together in the fall; but I was not then acting as official surveyor, as I had become a candidate during the summer for the State senate and was elected at the general election, 1857.

I represented some ten or twelve counties. From the influx of population to the upper counties, the State was not equally apportioned at that time, but under the constitution no change could be made till 1860. In my canvass at that time I was the nominee of the district, but had two opponents belonging to the American or Know-Nothing party. I received a majority of the opposition as well as of the Democratic votes. Various measures occupied the legislature that fall and winter, but none were of particular importance. The Central Railroad was building north from Houston and under the circumstances of the times could not do otherwise than forfeit its charter now and then; there was considerable opposition to its relief.

12. Protecting the Frontier, 1858-1865.

One of the most important subjects up for discussion in the legislature in 1858 was the protection of the frontier. The Comanches and renegade Indians had reopened hostilities. The half civilized Indians, together with four or five other tribes of a wilder nature, had been drawn together by the Federal government on the Brazos reserve (four leagues of land granted temporarily by the State

Digitized by Google

and situated in the lower part of Young County). These Indians remained friendly, and were progressing rapidly in civilization and in the practice of agriculture. Only a small portion of the Comanches could be induced to go on a reserve, located on the Clear Fork sixty miles west of the Brazos Reserve. The rest moved north of Red River and sent small thieving parties hundreds of miles through settled country far down into Texas. In my district they came as far south as Bell County. They desired no fight, but would kill any lone man or a family taken unaware. Their object was to drive off horses; many of these were left dead from exhaustion along their way back before getting beyond the settlements. Their raids were sometimes six months apart, but occurred simultaneously over the country by different bands.

We passed a bill during the session 1857-'58 to send out a hundred men, not so much to furnish protection to the frontier by the State, as to bring on an action with the Comanches and to give notice to the Federal government of its neglect in not protecting us. Captain John S. Ford led the expedition. The majority of his men were from below the frontier. But Captain Nelson of Bosque County with a number of men and Captain Ross, then subagent on the Brazos reservation, with a few friendly Indians accompanied him. They went as far north as the Canadian River, defeated a large party of Comanches and returned.

The population of this particular frontier district had recently arrived from the older States, and had acquaintance with Indians only through tradition. Their fear of all quite naturally included the friendly ones of the Brazos Reserve, who, in spite of their progress in civilization, still followed their old habits of roaming when they could, and camping out at times. The raiding Comanches who stole in and out unseen were confused with the Indians to be seen passing openly, and the result was that a violent prejudice against the Brazos Reserve developed. The agents for those Indians, in some cases being old settlers, themselves once exposed on the frontier, were not always unsympathetic with their own people.

At Christmas in 1858, a party of twenty men of good standing but of recent arrival in the country fired on a number of Indians who were fifteen or twenty miles from the Reserve, and killed several of them. The Indians in turn killed one of the whites

Digitized by Google

a boy of sixteen, son of John M. Stephens, the first settler and leader in Erath County, who himself was much opposed to the movement against the Indians. Three hundred men from Erath, Bosque, and Coryell counties then assembled, and elected as their leader Captain Nelson of Bosque County. The object was to endorse the whites in what had gone before, but Nelson had been in the campaign of John S. Ford when some of those same friendly Indians had been along serving the frontier. He sent at once for me; I had been in command of the friendly Indians in the Morehouse campaign.

I went to the camp on the Palo Pinto, in company with Norris, a lawyer from Coryell, an old Texan who had seen much of frontier and woods life. He and I were of the same opinion; we thought the affair ought to be deprecated. Nelson thought this course would lead to an even higher excitement and antagonism against the Indians, but decided to call a meeting to send a commission to the Reserve to compromise the matter with the agents. It was thought that nothing short of a removal of the Indians in time would put an end to the aggression on the part of the whites.

The commissioners chosen were James M. Norris, a man by the name of Walker from Bosque, and myself, and we proceeded to the Reserve. Captain Plummer of the United States Rifles, with his company of cavalry, two companies of United States infantry, and one piece of artillery was there guarding the Indians. The agents were absent. More or less was said to little purpose. The Indians seemingly were not much excited. I told them the people demanded that they should remain on their reserve, and their early removal out of Texas. They indicated willingness to this course. Captain Plummer said he was subject to higher authority, but would endeavor, if possible, to avoid a collision with the people.

We remained several days. The agents did not arrive. We returned to camp on the Palo Pinto without making any definite arrangements, but expressed our opinion that the Indians, officers, and agents would carry out the course suggested. The men disbanded to their homes, and to set the situation before him I wrote to Governor Runnels. Later he entered into correspondence with the Department of Interior to bring about the removal of all the Indians out of Texas.

Digitized by Google

At the time the people of Palo Pinto and Young, situated nearest the Indians, and others on the east side of the Brazos, as well as those in Comanche on the west side, were opposed to these demonstrations against the friendly Indians. But in the spring of 1859 a party of the wild Indians went clear down into Bell County, passing over a hundred miles through thick settlements, and after committing depredations, one of which was the killing of John Riggs and his wife on Cow House Creek, near Sugar Loaf Mountain, about twenty miles from Belton,[18] escaped driving back a large number of horses. Other counties grew excited. Friendly Indians were found outside of the Reserve, and a new attack on them commenced. Five to eight hundred men gathered on the east side of the Brazos fifteen miles below the Reserve. I informed Governor Runnels of this.

Governor Runnels appointed J. M. Steiner of Austin, John Henry Brown of Belton, Richard Coke, and James Smith of Waco, and myself as commissioners. We were to talk with the people in the interest of delay, Governor Runnels having received positive pledges from the United States government that the Indians were to be moved in August. Before we arrived at the camp of the men, some had disbanded on account of dissensions among themselves, but between one and two hundred had gone up close to the Reserve to parley with Captain Plummer, who, with three companies of regular infantry and some artillery, was now in charge. The Indians crowded around Captain Plummer at the meeting ready to assist their protectors, and the language used during the truce was not of a nature to induce the Federal commander to restrain them. The result was that as the frontiersmen moved off the Indians fired on them. One was killed and several were wounded.

When we arrived Captain Plummer met us with courtesy. The principal Indian agent, Major Robert S. Neighbors, was not there. Captain Shapleigh P. Ross, the subagent, was present, but as he did not believe his Indians to blame in the first place, naturally he stood up for them now. He told us arrangements were being made to move the Indians as soon as transportation could be obtained. He and Neighbors, not proposing to leave Texas, would

[18]For the exact location of the Riggs tragedy, and for verification of many personal names, the editor is indebted to Hon. Geo. W. Tyler.

Digitized by Google

resign. The Indians declared themselves most anxious to move, only awaiting orders to do so. Captain Plummer promised that the removal should be soon.

We attempted to go around to the different county seats to talk to the people whose excitement was far too high to allow of any calm deliberations. Having the authority, we called out a hundred men as protection until the removal of the Indians should take place. Captain Brown, who was placed in charge of this force, stationed himself at the Comanche Reserve on the Clear Fork as the Brazos Reserve by this time was being moved out.[19] As to the Comanches, for a time they refused to move and defied Captain Brown; they were forming to attack him when he fired on them and killed and defeated them badly. After this, they were allowed to gather up their plunder and move out of the State.

The frontier people were at outs with Runnels because he did not use severe measures against the Indians. General Houston, running as an independent against him in the election of 1859, received almost the unanimous vote of the frontier, although it was well known to older Texans that he had always favored a conciliatory policy toward the Indians. After the election Houston remained of the same disposition, for when I met him in Austin before he was inaugurated he expressed himself as greatly opposed to the policy the frontier had pursued toward the Brazos Reserve. I agreed, but I said no man would dare tell them so unless he wanted to be hanged, and that if he, Houston, went up there preaching peace they would hang him. He was willing to assent to this, knowing well the people, or that frontier element. I said, too, that the Comanches were guilty, if the others were not, and merited harsh treatment which they had not received from the settlers. We were well agreed on one thing, that the country was in for trouble for some time to come.

The United States looked upon Texans as the aggressors, which was not the case so far as the wild Indians were concerned. They were wrong only in regard to the Brazos Reserve Indians; even during the long war afterwards there was never evidence of the Brazos Indians committing depredations. But it was unfair for the United States government to retaliate on Texas by withholding

[19]An account of his services on this occasion is given by Major John Henry Brown in his *History of Texas*, II, 378.

Digitized by Google

from her protection on account of wrong done in one locality. The election of Sam Houston, the philanthropist in behalf of Indians, should have spoken for the greater part of Texas. Still the officers of the United States army, though displeased with the course of the people on the frontier, did make strong efforts next year to protect us, and made fair reports to the government on the subject of depredations which were now multiplied. But all through the Civil War and long afterwards the Indian reservations north of Red River fostered the Comanche raids on Texas by buying the property stolen in them. The Comanches were fostered in this manner by the United States long after Reconstruction had taken place. Not until General Sherman made his tour of inspection through Texas did conditions change rapidly.

I was up in some of the frontier counties on business in the fall of 1859 and found the trouble quieting down; the people at last admitted that the Comanches had been the depredators. When the legislature convened in the fall of 1859, the principal topic was Indian difficulties. Nothing was done in the early part of the session, General Houston not being inaugurated till Christmas. Other matters before us were the bringing about of a new apportionment of the State and the approaching political troubles which ended in Secession. The money received from the United States for the territory of New Mexico was about exhausted, and our taxation was not sufficient to support the government burdened with the additional expenses of protecting the frontier. Before the session's close we passed measures to call out a regiment of men if necessary, and Governor Houston did call out about a thousand in spring. During May and June, 1860, ten companies, commanded by Col. M. T. Johnson, marched northwestwardly from Fort Belknap, returned in August, and disbanded. Then as always before it was a mistake to expect Indians of the wild tribes to give battle to numbers, or to allow themselves to be found and forced to do so. General Houston was of the opinion that he could get the cooperation of the United States, and that the Indians, seeing the demonstration of Texas and the general government together, might be more inclined to submit to the latter. But before this I had learned from United States army officers of the antipathy between the Indian Department of the United States and Texas. After the return of our force, the

Digitized by Google

United States troops stationed on the outposts did make an effort to give protection to the frontier; Major Van Dorn of the U. S. cavalry was quite active in attempting to do so, despite the indifference of his government.

The presidential election was the absorbing topic in the latter part of the year 1860. Owing to the election of Lincoln, and to the subject of secession Governor Houston called the legislature to meet on the 21st of January, 1861. I believed in our right to secede, but was not in favor of making use of the right. When the people decided by vote to do so I went with the majority of my State. I was not in favor of the aggressive policy of the Abolition party. In this called session we passed a law for the protection of the frontier by allowing every frontier county, including McLennan and Bell, to raise one or more companies of minutemen. It was planned that a small number of men be out all the time, and the rest subject to be called out at any time, but that only those in actual service, and while actually in the field receive pay at a dollar a day, finding themselves. I raised the scouting party in McLennan, and spent two or three months ranging from the Palo Pinto to Pecan Bayou. The minute companies gave temporary relief.

I was a candidate for the State senate in the general election of the summer of 1861 and was elected. My district comprised eight counties, two of them not organized; half the district extending out on the frontier. Hill County was the only one in which I did not receive a majority of the votes. A man from that county ran against me and received a few votes over me there.

But my health was failing. From early youth I had suffered from indigestion, but never lost much time from business on that account. My friends have considered me in a very dangerous condition from an attack on one day, and the next I would be up and riding forty miles. The privations and hardships I could endure had become a matter of comment. But after the spell of sickness I now suffered, I was never as well again. My constitution had been impaired by exposures and hardships. Barely recovering for the meeting of the legislature, I never recovered the old feeling of satisfaction of life again.

The Civil War had now fairly set in. We passed another bill for a regiment for the protection of the frontier; it was to be

Digitized by Google

made up on the frontier, as the men in the lower counties were in the Confederate army. The Governor appointed Col. J. M. Norris commander. By the provisions of the law the men were stationed by companies at posts a day's ride apart in a line on the outer frontier edge to meet in scouts every few days. This plan had proved a failure in the first Indian war during the revolution, and it did not answer now. The regiment was organized early in the spring of 1862, and remained in service for a little over twelve months, when its place was supplied by men raised nominally under the Confederate government. There was but little variation in the depredations of the Indians.

The legislature of 1861 was in a great measure composed of men who had little experience in legislating; those who had experience had joined the army. I would like to speak of the ideas prevailing in that legislature and entertained by many of the people at that time. Almost all of the representatives, especially those from the eastern part of the State, were totally opposed to making appropriations for anything that in the course of government had been provided by the United States. They looked upon the new government as a fixture, like an old one, with plenty of money and means to furnish anything at any expense. They were very desirous, however, that everything purchased and all services rendered be paid for at once, and well paid for. Confederate money was looked upon as beyond any possibility of depreciation. The government was urged to spend it at a rate which could not prevent its decline in value far below par at an early day. There was a difference in the conduct of the masses now and in the time of the revolution against Mexico that made me apprehensive concerning the result. In our first revolution a soldier did not speak about pay. At some time way off he expected to receive pay at the rate of eight dollars a month. The farmer or citizen, who had anything to spare and often when he couldn't spare it, handed out his produce, perhaps, without even taking a receipt. If he happened to see the officer in charge, he probably asked for a receipt, thinking it might be well if a pay day should possibly come, but nothing more than the average price was expected. But the people of the Confederacy wanted money at once, and much of it. The soldier wanted his pay, and the candidate for legislative honors demanded more than the

Digitized by Google

soldiers themselves for raising the soldier's pay. The people who remained at home were the ones who had most to say about the financial affairs of the government. There were many prominent men who held the view that secession once gone into, we could not be reconquered or under any circumstances merged again in the United States. Their idea of international law forbade that the Confederacy, once on the roll of nations, could be wiped out. At the surrender some of these still expressed a decided opinion that, being defeated, we might have to pay heavy damages, perhaps lose territory, but to be brought back into the Union without our consent, that was impossible. The prospect in 1861 loomed gloomier more from prevailing mistaken ideas than from our actual lack of strength.

After the legislature adjourned I was too restless, from the prospect of the fate of war and also from my changed health, to remain at home. I joined the army, not believing much in any service I could render, but hoping that campaign life might benefit me. Our men wanted to go on horseback. There were plenty of horses in Texas. With men available, our State could have furnished a cavalry for the war that would have vied with that of Cossacks and Tartars, or the heavy armed knights of old; but infantry was then wanted. Richard Coke had just returned from Virginia, he reasoned with the people about their inclination to ride, and raised a company of infantry. I also raised one of infantry. They became part of a regiment known as the 15th Texas, commanded by Colonel J. W. Speight.

After being organized we were stationed, until the month of June, near Millican on the Central Railroad, so as to be convenient to Galveston or elsewhere when needed. In June we received orders to march east by way of Tyler, to be merged in some army corps of the Confederacy in Louisiana or Arkansas. As I was very weak, having to be transported sick much of the time, I offered my resignation while we delayed at Tyler. It was not accepted, but I was given a furlough for three months to recuperate. My eldest son, Edwin Porter Erath, not quite sixteen years old, was with me and was discharged nominally on account of his youth to accompany me home. Later he was in a volunteer cavalry regiment and, after going through the battle of Yellow Bayou, died of fever in camp in Louisiana, still under eighteen years of age. I

Digitized by Google

again tendered my resignation in September, and it was accepted. My health was worse, but in 1863 I was recovered enough to transact business and to ride to town seven miles away.

On going into the army I had vacated my place in the legislature, which met three or four times during the year to devise means to help the Confederacy. The frontier was unprotected, and the legislature passed a law calling out the militia in the frontier counties. They were to act on the minute plan; that is a few were to be always scouting, the rest to be in readiness at any time called. They were to furnish everything themselves, except perhaps ammunition, and were to receive at some future time scant pay in Confederate money. The belt of frontier counties was divided into three districts, and a field officer with the rank, pay, and emoluments of major of cavalry, was placed in command of each district. In the first days of January, 1864, I was surprised by an express from the Governor tendering me a commission to command the middle district. I accepted and repaired at once to the frontier and established my headquarters in Gatesville, about central so far as east and west was concerned, San Saba being the extreme western and Johnson the eastern county. Palo Pinto and the counties due west belonged to the first or northern district. I had some six or eight counties in my district, containing in all fourteen companies and about a thousand men. This service was in the nature of local protection. Only in case of formidable invasion were the men to be taken out of their counties; but they frequently scouted in adjoining counties. I was to see the service performed, travel around through the different counties, inspect, and give directions. I still had frequent attacks of illness, which sometimes rendered me so weak I could not mount a horse without assistance, though often, once mounted, I rode the whole day.

The Indians had changed considerably. They were now dressed in clothes, were well armed and, with their usual activity and sagacity, moved faster than in old days and hid their tracks better. They could hardly be surprised, and when surprised, or in surprising our scouts, they were more daring and braver, at least at the onset, than of old. Small parties of my men had frequent encounters with small parties of Indians; the losses on each side were about equal.

Digitized by Google

About the time the Confederacy surrendered, the Indians were showing a disposition for peace, as evidenced by interviews between them and General Throckmorton, who then commanded the northern district. But the collapse of the Confederacy frustrated any plans, and after the surrender depredations were continued with more vigor than before. The Indians held to their old idea that the people of Texas were a different tribe from those of the United States, and that they could make war on the one without the other having a right to interfere.

At the close of the year, 1864, while I was at Austin, under orders to report there for a consultation, a party of about a hundred Kickapoos crossed Red River, on their way to emigrate to Mexico. They had with them their families and property, and seemed not disposed to molest any one on the way. They had roamed through Texas in early days, depredated in Mexico, and, at the request of Mexico, had been removed by the United States to the northern part of the Indian Territory about 1854. In the early days of the Civil War they had been employed by the Union against the civilized Indians of the Territory, who were taking part with the South. Tired of that strife they had now come to some arrangement with Mexico to settle in her territory. What they might have done later against Texas from Mexico is a matter of conjecture. Their entrance into Texas aroused the frontier at once; and the old inability to make distinctions between Indians remained as before. A small Confederate troop was started after them; messages were sent to all the counties in my district; everything available was put in motion under Captain Totten, senior officer in my absence. He fell in with Captain Forest of the Confederate force, who outranked him, and under the Confederate commander they reached the Indian camp on the Concho River. Without any reconnoitering the camp was charged at once. The Indians were armed with improved guns; they were good marksmen. The whites were repulsed; in vain they rallied two or three times, and were at last obliged to fall back to a sheltered place with their wounded. The Indians then moved away in haste, crossed the Rio Grande, and continued to annoy western Texas for years afterward as the Comanches did the northern part. The affair might have been prevented. The Indians had talked to the settlers all along their route. A flag of truce should have been

Digitized by Google

sent them; and if fighting had to be it should have been after they had moved on from such a strong position. I would have allowed them to pass had I been there—that is if I could have controlled the frontiersmen, always crazed at the sight of Indians, and determined to kill.

13. Aftermath of the Civil War

The confusion after Lee's and Johnston's surrender threatened lawlessness. Men who called themselves soldiers rushed to Texas, probably because their war time misdeeds prevented their remaining at home. But the good, true soldiery, who had fought for the South, now came again to the front to maintain and quiet the country. Their declaration of a determination to yield to the laws of the land and to uphold order had its effect and much violence was prevented. A number of citizens, many of them our best, believing that they could not again live under the United States, tried Mexico, but they soon returned.

I was of the ranks of those broken financially. Like many another old Texan I had been careless of accumulating. Now prewar debts, incurred by going security for others, had to be paid. My own long-standing notes against others were paid in Confederate money at a late moment when one must take it or seem to throw doubt on the Confederacy. With ill health, old age, and new times to combat, I had to start again.

As regards the new times, one word here against the exemption laws of Texas after annexation. The bankrupt law passed by the United States indicated a communistic or agrarian spirit especially when added to Texas exemption laws from execution. It encouraged men otherwise good to take the benefit of it. First the idea to take it against Northern debts was all right and a part of the war; but it soon became neighbor against neighbor, and compromises by paying a certain per cent altogether evaded. Men took the bankrupt law, who were openly to the world wealthier after than before, while those who suffered from their action could but look on powerless to do anything. This to me in the new times has been the hardest oppression to keep still under. I have wanted to fight worse than in the old Mexican war days.

With the beginning of the year '73 political affairs brightened. A general election was to take place that fall; the disabilities of

Digitized by Google

most of those who had served in the Confederacy had been removed; I was urged by many of my old friends to run again for the legislature. Coke was candidate for governor, and was nominated by the convention. One of the earliest county meetings before the convention took place at Meridian, Bosque County, and nominated me unanimously for senator of the district. I had a decided majority in my favor in McLennan, but a strong man was running against me. At a Democratic convention held at Gatesville, I failed by a fraction of a vote to get a two-thirds majority. My friends proposed to leave it to the primary vote of McLennan, which proposition was accepted, and I had the nomination with at least four-fifths of the vote. On account of my generally conservative course the Republican party did not nominate a candidate against me but put my name on their ticket. So I had no opposition.

The Democratic party had put several planks in their platform which under the circumstances were not tenable; one was the immediate call of a convention for the change of the constitution. It had to be abandoned during the first session of the legislature, and could only be passed at the second session after the adjournment of the United States congress. This and several other issues I saw proper to oppose, and was criticized but endorsed later.

I did not expect to be a candidate for re-election, but my name was urged and I failed to obtain the nomination. Three men had been nominated for the district, each from a different county; there were eight counties in the district. One of the men seemed to be unsatisfactory to the voters. On the Saturday preceding the Monday, the day of the election, I heard it whispered in the town of Waco that I was to be run as an independent. I objected, and stated that even if I could acquiesce it was too late for my name to be known all over the district. I thought no more about it; I regarded it as a piece of folly that would not be attempted with Sunday only intervening; but on my return to town Monday I learned that my name was on the tickets and that couriers had been sent to the different counties on Sunday morning. I regretted it all, and I had no idea that so many Democrats would vote against the party nominee; for the counties nearby to which the information was carried gave me a majority, and my own also; many voted for me who had criticized unfavorably my course

Digitized by Google

before. On the whole I came nearer being elected than I supposed was possible; I was pleased with one thing, that in retiring from public life I could take with me this appreciation of the people for whose interest I had worked my best, but to please whom I had learned was a hard task.

I was content to retire, my health was worse than ever, and by the next canvass an entirely new district was created by grouping McLennan with Hill and Johnson, counties with which I had little acquaintance. But my name was run again, supported unanimously by the delegates from McLennan, but not by the others. I had not the requisite two-thirds majority, and a dark horse was the result.

My eyes have now failed me altogether, my hearing is not good, but my memory of events is but slightly impaired. As in earlier times, so through my late years I am still called upon to give information on land affairs. I am besieged with questions and through letters I cannot see to read requesting me to study up information, and to explain how land came to be located thus and so in times of different laws and different usages, for the present generation knows nothing of the difficulties that surrounded surveying forty and fifty years ago.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INDEX

Allen's Landing (Houston) in 1836, 42.
Ayres, David, merchant at Cole's Landing, 14.

Baker, Mosely, spokesman in council of officers at San Jacinto, 33.
Barrow, Capt., stationed at the Falls of the Brazos in 1836, 47; lived near Waco in 1849, 85.
Billingsley, Jesse, at San Jacinto, 33; death, 34 note.
Blackey, Edward, killed at San Jacinto, 25, 38.
Bonnell, Capt., killed on the Rio Grande in 1842, 73, 74, 75, 76.
Brazoria village in 1833, 15.
Brown, captain of the schooner *Sabine* in 1833, 14.
Brown, John Henry, Indian commissioner in 1859, 91, 92.
Burney, George E., introduced bill creating McLennan County in 1850, 86.
Butler, Jonas, owner of site of Waco, 85.
Buchman, Lt., on the Rio Grande in 1842, 73, 74, 76.
Burleson, Edward, at Bexar in 1835, 26; at San Jacinto, 33-40; at San Antonio in 1842, 64.

Calder, R. J., death, 34 note.
Caldwell, townsite surveyed by Geo. B. Erath, 84.
Cameron, townsite surveyed by Geo. B. Erath, 83.
Chalk, Whitfield, escaped from Mier in 1842, 74, 75, 76, 78.
Chambers, Thos. J., owner of site of Waco, 85.
Chalmers, Lucinda (Mrs. Geo. B. Erath), 83.
Childers, Frank, killed in Elm Creek fight, 51, 52, 53.
Childers, Goldsby, lived near Little River Fort, 46.
Childers, Robert, participated in Elm Creek fight, 48, 49, 50.
Clark, David, killed in Elm Creek fight, 49, 51, 52.
Coke, Richard, Indian commissioner in 1859, 91; raised a company in 1862, 96.
Coleman, Robert M., an Indian fighter, 23, 25, 26, 47; dismissed by President Houston, 48.
Cole's Landing, 14; Cole's Settlement, 17.
Colorado (Coleman's) Fort, 48, 53.
De Cordova, Jacob, land agent, 85.
Craft, orderly sergeant, 33.
Cullens, soldier at Little River Fort, 48.
Curtis, Lieut., stationed at Little River Fort, 48, 49, 53.
Curtis, Stilman S., killed by Indians in 1838, 56.

Davis, Lee R., participated in Elm Creek fight, 47, 49, 51.

Eastern Texas, pro-Houston in 1840, 78.
Elm Creek Fight in 1837, 48-53.
Erath, Edwin Porter, died of fever in Louisiana, 96.
Erath, George B., education, 1-5; journey to America, 7-12; in Cincinnati, 13; in Florence, Alabama, 14; goes to Texas, 14; sick, 17; settles in Robertson's Colony, 18; becomes a surveyor, 21; fights Indians, 23; at San Jacinto, 30-42; builds Little River Fort, 47-48; in Elm Creek fight, 48-53; joins expedition to the Rio Grande in 1842, 64-78; serves in Congress, 79-83; engages in surveying, 83-88; moves to Waco, 86; in frontier service, 88-92; major in frontier battalion, 97-99; death, 1 note.

Falls of the Brazos, 47, 53.
Felder, Edmund J., participated in expedition to the Rio Grande, 76 note.
Fiske, land locator, 25.
Fokes, John, in Elm Creek fight, 49.
Ford, John S., led an expedition against the Comanches in 1858, 89.
Forest, Capt., ordered attack on the Kickapoos on the Concho in 1864, 98.
Fort Prairie, 47.
Frontier, condition of, 46, 54, 56, 60, 84, 87, 88.
Frontier battalion in 1864, 97.

Digitized by Google

Galveston, founding of, 45.
Gillespie, Capt., in expedition to the Rio Grande, 76.
Graves, Thomas A., surveyor of Milam County, 24, 25, 55 note.
Green, George, partner of George B. Erath, 43, 84.
Green, Tom, in the expedition to the Rio Grande, 76.
Gross, Jacob, in Elm Creek fight, 49.

Hancock, George, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 73.
Hicks, escaped from Mexicans on the Rio Grande, 75, 76.
Hill, Captain, defeated for congress by Geo. B. Erath, 47, 78, 79.
Hopson, Jack, in Elm Creek fight, 49.
Hornsby's, frontier settlement on the Colorado in 1836, 47.
Houston, Sam, San Jacinto campaign, 28-42; opposition to Houston in Western Texas, 31, 78; orders to General Somervell, 65; foreign policy, 81; Indian policy, 92.
Howlet, James, surveyor of Milam County, 55, 84.

Indians, peculiar view of the whites, 22, 98; capture Parker's Fort, 44; Elm Creek fight, 48-53; service of friendly Indians, 57; José María, 58; Reserve Indians, 88-92; Kickapoos attacked on Concho River in 1864, 98.

Johnson, M. T., led an expedition against the Indians in 1860, 93.
Jones, Wiley, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 64, 74.

Kaufman, David, introduced the first preemption bill, 86.

Lockhart's house on the Guadalupe, 77, 78.
Long, an Irishman, killed by Indians, 24, 25.
Lishely, in Elm Creek fight, 49.
Little River Fort, 47.

McCoy, Green, in Elm Creek fight, 49.
McCulloch, Ben and Henry, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 76.
McLellan, killed in the Alamo, 25.
McLennan, John, sheriff of Milam County, 85.
McLennan, Neill, settled on South Bosque, 53, 84.
McLennan, Neill, Jr., partner of Geo. B. Erath, 86.
McLochlan, Sergeant, in Elm Creek fight, 47-52.
Mexican soldiers at San Jacinto were brave, 39; dead not buried, 42; prisoners taken to Galveston. 45.
Milam County, population in 1839, 56.
Monroe's Settlement, 61.
Moore, Lewis, in Elm Creek fight, 48, 49, 51.
Moore, John H., Indian campaign, 23, 63.
Moore, Morris, in Elm Creek fight, 49.
Morehouse expedition in 1841, 57, 58.
Motion, name of brig on which Geo. B. Erath came to America, 9.

Nashville, 49, 53.
Neighbors, Robert S., Indian agent, 91.
Neill, Colonel, wounded at San Jacinto, 31, 36.
Nelson, Captain, appreciated services of friendly Indians, 89, 90.
Norris, James M., Indian commissioner, 90, 95.
Norwegian settlement in Bosque County, 87.

Office holding during the Republic, 54.
Oldham, Tom, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 76, 78.
Oxsheer, William, associated with Geo. B. Erath, 85.
Oxwagon, 15.

Palo Blanco, 76.
Parker's Fort, captured by Indians in 1836, 44.
Pierce, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 74.
Pioneers of Texas, 17, 18, 19, 58, 59.
Plummer, Capt., at the Brazos Reserve, 90, 91, 92.
Pond Creek, 53.
Porter, John W., frend to Geo. B. Erath, 15, 17, 18, 44; death, 17.
Preemptions, 86.

"Remember the Alamo!" expression used by Sam Houston, 38; battle cry at San Jacinto, 40.
Riggs, John, killed near Sugar Loaf Mountain, 91.
Ross, Shapleigh P., stationed at Waco, 84; Indian agent, 89, 91.
Run-away-scrape, houses unmolested above San Felipe, 43, 44.
Runnels, Governor, Indian policy, 90-92.
Rusk, Thos. J., at San Jacinto, 30.

Digitized by Google

Sabine, schooner on which George B. Erath came to Texas, 14.
St. Clair, in expedition to the Rio Grande, 74, 75, 76.
San Antonio, effect of capture in 1835, 26.
San Jacinto, battle, 28-42.
Santa Anna, importance of his capture, 37; his baggage, 39; military chest, 41; conduct as an officer, 40; his release, 45.
Santa Fe expedition, 59.
Scott, a surveyor, 21.
Simmons, on guard with Geo. B. Erath at San Jacinto, 40.
Smith, Major, successor to Capt. Coleman, 48, 53.
Smith, James, Indian commissioner, 91.
Somervell, Alexander, commanded expedition to the Rio Grande, 65-70.
Speight, J. W., commanded 15th Texas, 96.
Steiner, J. M., Indian commissioner, 91.
Stephens, John M., founder of Stephenville, 87, 90.
Stephenville townsite surveyed by Geo. B. Erath, 87.
Sugar Loaf Mountain, 91.
Surveying, how it was done, 54-57; afforded protection to frontier, 55, 56.
Sydnor, owner of site of Waco, 85.

Tenoxtitlan, 19, 20.
Thompson, Empson, in Elm Creek fight, 49, 51.
Thomson, Alexander, surveyor, 21.
Tyler, Geo. W., data furnished by, 48, 78, 91.

Velasco in 1833, 15.

Waco, townsite surveyed by Geo. B. Erath, 85.
Waco, Indian village, 84, 85.
Walker, Indian commissioner, 90.
Walnut Creek Fort, 47.
Ware, N. A., owner of site of Waco, 85.
Western Texas opposed to Houston, 31, 78; vote of depopulated counties, 78.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

University of California Library
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

NON-RENEWABLE
ILL/CBL
SEP 29 1994
DUE 2 WKS FROM DATE RECEIVED

Digitized by Google

University of California, Los Angeles
L 006 214 606 3

Digitized by Google